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THAT MOST DISTRESSFUL COUNTRY.

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THAT MOST DISTRESSFUL COUNTRY.

A Novel.

BY

E. C. BOYSE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE endeavoured in this book to give an impartial view of the state of Ireland during 1798. The incidents described are taken either from history, or from private letters written by individuals who were, in many instances, eye-witnesses of what occurred during the progress of the Rebellion.

THAT MOST DISTRESSFUL COUNTRY.

CHAPTER I.

"I think my grandmother this might be,
As she would look in the days of yore,
Feeding her pets in her girlish glee,
There on the steps by the old Hall door."

I never was a clever woman, so my readers must not expect from these pages more than a simple record of the history of one family, during the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

They must remember, too, that news travelled very slowly to remote country places, and I cannot, therefore, give a very clear or well-connected account of anything but those events in which I took an actual part.

For of what happened elsewhere we heard so irregularly and incorrectly that it was impossible to form a correct idea of the progress of the great outbreak.

And if I have given an undue prominence to mere personal or family matters, forgive a country girl, to whom such things were of greater importance than the burning political questions which engrossed the attention of wiser folk.

I must take my readers back a great many years, to a lovely autumn evening late in October; when I, Bride Kavanagh, stood on the Hall door-steps feeding my pigeons.

There had been a heavy shower, and the rain-drops still shone on the leaves and grass in the golden light; and my pigeons were preening their moist feathers when I called them down for their supper.

Down they flew from all odd corners of the roof, at the sight of my basket. Pigeons of every kind and size and colour might be seen in the great flock that wheeled and circled round my head, and cooed, strutted, and hustled each other at my feet.

A few were even bold enough to perch on my basket, and peck half shyly at its contents.

Two or three cats and several dogs stood jealously watching the pretty birds, forgetting for the moment their own private and undying feuds, though I think Tip, the red terrier, had a mind to give chase to Tabby when my back was turned; and she snapped her teeth at the pigeons, as if her mouth watered to taste one.

I do not know that our Irish home would be much admired now, but we all loved it dearly.

Part of it was a ruin of some very old castle, and the beautiful tracery of the chapel windows still remained, though much over-grown with wild ivy and red valerian. Then some ancestor had built rooms with the old stones,

and more recently another had added others in yellow brick, without thinking how they agreed with the older part of the house outside; but just studying how to make himself space within; but the roses and ivy covered a great deal, and so it was less noticeable.

Inside was a great oak panelled hall, and its walls were covered with rods, guns, armour, nets, and all manner of things that I can hardly enumerate, with skins of many birds and beasts.

Through this hall I went to find my mother; as I expected, she sat at her work-frame, with my little sister Mollie at her feet, nursing her kitten in the drawing-room.

It was a large lofty room, hung with many pictures of our ancestors, rather black, mostly with age and smoke.

The fireplace was tiled with blue and white tiles, and now and then Mollie put down the kitten to hunt there for some of her favourite pictures, and indeed, we had all learnt our Bible history off them. Mother was a sweet fair woman, and people said she looked like our eldest sister; she had passed most of her younger days in England, and had hardly a trace of the brogue in her speech.

"Well, Bride," she said, "did you take old Biddie her medicine?"

"I did, mother," I said.

"Oh, sister, why did you not take me?" cried Mollie.

"I could not find you, darling," I said, stroking her tangled golden curls. Mollie's blue eyes filled with reproachful tears and her red lips pouted as she replied:

"I does like to go to Biddie, and hear stories of Cromwell, and eat girdle cakes; and Biddie can tell all about the good people, too, and she has seen them, mother, really!"

Mother smiled.

"Has she, darling? I have seen many a fairy ring, but I never was fortunate enough to see the good people as Biddie calls them."

"Don't you think Biddie's tales are true?" I said. "I mean about the troubled times, of course."

"Very true, probably; these traditions are often handed down most accurately, and throwing stones on the heaps made in memory of events prevents their being easily forgotten," answered mother.

"I wonder will we ever see any great events in our time?" I went on half to myself. "If the French had come, mother, it would have been something."

"Thank God they did not!" said my mother earnestly; for in this autumn of 1797 the threats of a French invasion were fresh and the danger scarce averted.

"The little mother is no Amazon, Bride," cried my brother Walter, who had just entered. "She would rather be making con-

serves and distilled waters with you," and so saying he bent down to kiss her.

Mother returned the caress fondly. I think if she who loved us all so well had a favourite it was her eldest son; and indeed, he was the best and kindest of sons and brothers.

"Indeed. I want no change either, Walter," I said. "We are all so happy, I would like things to go on just as they are for ever."

"And Bride always makes good jam," put in little Mollie.

"Then you would like that to go on for ever too, Mollie," said Walter smiling, as he pulled her golden curls.

"Sure you're right, Mollie, and I'm not for change either. 'Tis Larry and Kathie have all the fighting blood of the family."

"Were you out this afternoon, Walter?"

"Oh yes, mother, I rode the colt over to Ballybreen, and then I came back to do some accounts for father, and I've been reading ever since."

Walter loved books, which was a rare taste in those times, when most young gentlemen cared for nothing but outdoor sports, or gambling and drinking.

Walter was a good shot and rider too, so they all marvelled the more at his bookish tastes.

"Are the people quiet and contented?" asked mother.

"Never more so," replied Walter. "There

are fewer fights, less drinking ; Larry would tell you 'tis as dull as a dance without the piper ; quite a change come over the country."

"Oh, mother darling, never fear for Wexford," I cried. "Think how the boys reaped father's corn in the night last summer for fear the storm should come, and never let him know who did it, lest he should pay them."

"They all love father," chimed in Mollie, who had been amusing herself with the tiles, and in tracing out her dear "Joseph in the pit" had contrived to blacken her fat hands with soot, which she had also rubbed over her face, so I carried her off to wash her.

As we came back through the long gallery from my room there was a sudden noise of doors slamming, a merry voice calling dogs and servants, and a general stir below. Mollie cried out :

"Larry's come home! Larry, Larry darling!"

Larry was singing gaily :

"Oh, love is the sowl of a rale Irishman,"

but broke off to answer the child, and came racing up the stairs, followed by Kathleen in her gold-laced riding-habit and half a dozen dogs. He twirled me round, gave me a kiss, and catching up Mollie sprang astride on the bannister rail and slid down to the hall just as mother came out of her parlour.

"Larry, you wild boy," she said, "you will break the child's neck."

"Sorrow a bit, mother," cried Larry, hugging mother tightly; "Mollie likes it."

"Oh, mother darling," exclaimed Kathie, flying downstairs, "father sends his love, and he could not leave uncle, for Mick Cronan's sloop has brought the fresh lemons, the first of the season, and uncle has called in the neighbours and is brewing the biggest punch-bowl full, and they mean to make a night of it."

Kathie stopped from want of breath; Larry broke in:

"Father will bring over the Walkers and Farrells, O'Haras, and lots more to-morrow, for the meet's at the Rathnalime Road the day after, so we are to call in the pipers and have a foine time intirely, and dance all night and half the next. And, Walter, maybe you will be sorry to hear Eveleen Byrne's coming," wound up Larry with a mischievous laugh and meaning wink.

"All right, Larry boy," said Walter; "look at the mud on the pair of you, and old Keeran has been ringing away at the dinner-bell for this half-hour; send them off to clean themselves, mother."

Mother laughed; she was never so happy as when we were all around her, and I think we were as united a family as well might be.

Walter was twenty-three, and Larry nine-

teen, I came next, and was just turned eighteen.

Walter and I had mother's chestnut hair and hazel eyes; but he was tall and good-looking, and I small and slight, and no great beauty, though some called me pretty who loved me. Kathleen was really lovely; she had violet eyes with long black curly lashes, regular features, and a skin like milk and roses for bloom and fairness, which never seemed to tan though she lived out of doors with the boys.

Larry was very like her, only he was sunburnt, and they were the gayest, merriest, wildest pair that ever brought sunshine into a house, always dancing, singing, or laughing. Kathie was sixteen, and there had been two more between Kathie and Mollie, both boys who died young, so Baby Mollie was our pet and plaything and sadly spoiled sometimes.

We were all ready for dinner at last, and the old butler asked as usual, "Will I strip, ma'am?" and took off the covers. His assistant was just taken into service, and he kept Larry and Kathie laughing, because he walked out of his shoes, to which he was unaccustomed, and waited in his stockings, and did other queer things besides.

But we were all too busy arranging plans for the morrow to heed him very much.

CHAPTER II.

> "One and all,
> Great and small,
> They were asked to the Hall
> To dine there and sup, and wind up with a ball."

We were up betimes next day, and first after breakfast, as usual, had to feed the old folks, beggars, cripples, idiots, and such pensioners as gathered on the Hall steps daily to get broken victuals.

Their blessings were profuse as ever.

"May the heavens be your bed, Master Walter honey; and may ye have seventeen childre' at laste," whined one old crone, "and the finest woife in the counthry."

"Come, Antie," laughed Larry, "you shan't have this stirabout till you wish me better still; quick, now, two wives at least."

"Ah, Masther Larry, sure you'll have your joke; three wives to ye, sor, all at once, if you like."

"Take your breakfast, you'll not beat that. What's wrong with you now, Mother Magrath?" said Larry to an old woman who, buried in her cloak, was moaning pitifully to Mollie's great distress.

"Oh, oh, oh! the pig's dead, sor; 'twas

the foinest little boneen ever you saw, and 'tis dead!"

"What did it die of?"

"Sorra a know, I know, sor. Oh, 'twas complaining a month or more. Oh, oh, oh!"

Kathie and I condoled with the bereaved mourner, but Larry, ever prompt, ran round to the yard, where troops of pigs were kept, vaulted the wall, had a tremendous chase which ended in the capture of a sturdy little fellow; and racing back breathless with his prize, Larry plumped it suddenly into the old dame's arms. She hugged it rapturously, and showered blessings on my brother, ending with:

"God and the Blessed Vargin, keep your handsome face safe, Masther Larry, for the next six months."

"What does that mean, mother?" asked Walter rather gravely.

"What would it mean, sor, but just what I say? sorra a taste else," returned Mother Magrath.

Walter looked unsatisfied, but mother called to us to bring green branches to deck the Hall, and we all ran off to the gardens—which were walled in, and where grew plenty of flowers, and indeed of everything.

Kathie and I filled our arms with hydrangeas, marigolds, gilliflowers, red berries, and all the few late blossoms we could find, while the boys cut great boughs, and in

we went merrily to stick evergreens in the stag's antlers, and behind the guns, and wherever we could fasten them.

Then after that, Walter and Larry took guns and rods, to cater as best they could for our guests; and with them went Kathie, who would no more stay in the house of her own will than a mavis would be caged.

For my part I loved helping mother in the stillroom, and we compounded dainty dishes from our old recipe book, for mother had learnt many in her youth, for which our house was famed; and little Mollie stoned raisins or skinned almonds, and was very proud to help.

In the kitchen the servants were busy, and, as usual, in great confusion, very unlike our modern servitors. They worked with a will, though, if they did stay sometimes to fight, for our cook was hot-tempered, and threw saucepans at her helpers.

It was late in the afternoon when a breathless little gossoon raced in to say:

"His honour was just here, with a mighty foine company with him."

We all went out to the steps, and up rode my father first, and springing down he kissed mother fondly as he always did, and stood by her, welcoming the guests who came, some on horseback, some on outside cars.

Such a merry noisy party, more than a score of them, the old house rang with jokes

and laughter as they trooped in; Kathie and Larry were in wild spirits, and the Walker and O'Hara girls were no way behind them for fun.

Walter said something pleasant to all, and then fell back quietly to the window-ledge, where I was sitting with Eveleen Byrne, a niece of Mr. Walker's, who was my greatest friend.

She was a very pretty bright girl, not so loud and noisy as her cousins, with bright sunny hair, and great soft grey eyes.

Somehow I saw, as Walter came up, that I should be no longer the first with my favourite brother, and I felt a selfish pang of regret; but I would have been ashamed any one could know I was so mean-spirited; and who could be better worthy of him than Evelene? she was so sweet-tempered and wise.

We kept early hours then, and it was near on dinner-time, so we girls went off to make ourselves smart, and put on flowers and ribbons and all the fineries we possessed; and there was plenty of news to tell and to hear, though it would not interest any one else much.

A goodly sight was the great dining-room that night, for all the flower of the county-side sat at our table.

Yet there was no one there to name with father. Young O'Hara, Larry, and two or three other of the finest men were

shorter than he by half a head, and neither Larry nor Walter were as handsome. Mother, in her soft grey brocade and her old laces, lappets, and pinners, looked sweet and gentle as usual. Somehow, every one loved mother, though she had been brought up in England, and could not bear the rude noisy ways and the drinking which prevailed in these days in Ireland.

Mother's influence over the boys kept them from these habits, though Larry dearly loved fun of every kind, and our house was almost the only one where neither religious nor political differences of opinion led to strife, and too often to bloodshed.

But the mildest and most uneducated respected mother, she was so firm and consistent with all her sweetness, and so kind to all. I think our dinner would have surprised our grandchildren; such profusion of enormous joints and such flocks of poultry appeared and disappeared among the merry, hungry guests, some of whom had ridden twenty or thirty miles.

The servants ran about, sometimes in their zeal falling over each other, when a mighty clatter of broken plates ensued, and the pack of dogs which wandered about rushed in to secure the fragments.

It was all over at last, and the ladies left the dining-room, whispering to their favourite partners not to delay too long.

The pipers were ready in the hall, and at the first sound of their merry music some of the younger men appeared, though we heard shouts of "Whoop there, stole away?" from the rest.

Walter sought out Eveleen, who looked charming in her white dress and blue ribbons. Many of the other girls were handsome, especially Lizzie Walker, a dashing, beautiful brunette, who had tumbled up somehow at home among a crowd of brothers and sisters, in a house that no one ever thought of repairing; but the star of them all was my lovely sister Kathleen.

She wore a more womanly dress to-night than she had ever done before, and with the last crimson roses of summer in her hair she was bewitching, and 'twas small wonder how the men crowded about her; but, like the saucy child she was, she would have none of the older men of position, but went off with Teddy O'Hara, a boy younger than herself, who could dance like a mayfly over a trout stream, he was so active.

We were all suited soon; I dancing first with Mr. Bagenal Harvey, who was a plain little man, and not young, but pleasant.

My father had been the best dancer for miles round, and he had lost none of his old step and spring as he led out Mrs. O'Hara.

Of course the windows were unshuttered,

that all the people who liked might see the company taking their diversion.

Pretty soon we had to open them for coolness, and then the remarks were amusing enough.

"Holy Virgin see to his honour, now; 'tis a beautiful sight when he takes the flure."

"Sure Masther Larry can throw a lep like a hare, and 'tis himself knows how to choose a partner," quoth another old woman.

"Ah, Masther Walter dear, 'tis powerful cold out here: send us out a little dhrop now to be wishing you and the pretty lady there good luck in."

This demand was accompanied by so knowing a nod and look that Evie blushed scarlet; but Walter laughed cheerily, and gave orders to Keeran, and soon the spectators were enjoying themselves in the food and drink in plenty round the great turf fire lit in the yard.

With unabated zeal the dancing went on for hours, only interrupted by a substantial supper, after which some of the elders went to bed, but we young ones kept it up till cock-crow, when we finished with a great pot of strong gunpowder tea and hot buttered cakes and syllabub. Then all who could claim cousinly privileges exchanged a kiss or two, and perhaps a few were stolen besides, and then to bed, half a dozen or more girls in each room, and the men anywhere.

CHAPTER III.

"Hunters are fretting, and hacks in a lather,
Sportsmen arriving from left and from right;
Bridle roads bringing them, see how they gather,
Dotting the meadows with scarlet and white."

It seemed as if we girls had hardly done laughing and talking over the fun when we heard Larry, Ted O'Hara, French Barrington, and half a score more, singing at the top of their voices, "Wake! wake! ye drowsy sleepers," ending each verse with a rattling view hollo.

Kathie, Louie Walker, and Eveleen, who were to ride, were up at the first call, nor were the rest of us much behind, though 'twas not so easy to dress by candle-light.

Downstairs all was bustle and hurry, flasks were filled, breakfast eaten in haste, for the meet was some miles away, and every man and mother's son who had any sort of a beast meant to ride; for the hounds met at Ballyraheen, the best meet of all the barony, and the first of the season. The horses were already at the door, and a mixed lot they were—every sort of steed, from my father's grand old bay to Ted O'Hara's rat-tailed chesnut, which, though 'twas the greatest

screw ever known, was somehow always in the first flight.

Three or four outside cars were ready for the rest of us girls, and Lizzie Walker, whose horse was lame, was glad to ride with me and little Mollie and her own sister Fanny, and our old coachman Kinsella to drive us.

'Twas a fair morning when the fog lifted, and we could see the hedges a bit.

Kathleen and Ted and several more rode on first, laughing and joking; then came father and Mr. O'Hara and Mr. Harvey, and I thought they seemed talking seriously, till Larry and Louie Walker came up to us, and stayed by the car, and some of the rest caught us up, and we were all too merry to heed our elders, for Larry and the Walkers never met without a racket. Ballyraheen was reached at last, just as the hounds and the master trotted up from the opposite direction.

I had never been there before, for it was far from Ballydorough, and a poor little place, with huts just built of mud, without chimneys or windows; we had nothing so miserable.

The meet was a large one, but I noticed the cottagers seemed to hold aloof, not like ours who loved any such diversion, and they looked sullen and miserable. Larry had jumped down and called a boy to hold his horse, but soon he had led it up to the car, and bade Kinsella take the reins, and I saw he looked grave.

"What is it, Larry?" said Lizzie Walker.

"Not much," he answered; "only, when I called the gossoon there, he stood like a post, and cursed me under his breath."

Lizzie leant towards him and said in a low tone, "Larry boy, I'm neither fool nor coward, as you know, but I don't like the looks of them here. Never trust woman again, if there's not mischief brewing." It frightened her to hear her speak so, for she was a sharp, clever girl, and her brothers associated with all manner of people,; but just then Lord Mohurry gave the signal, and the hunt moved on, and we drove off away through a long lane, where we had much ado to keep from being jolted off into the deep ruts; for old Kinsella had a mind to see the sport, and went along at a rattling pace, till we got out in a cross-road, below the covert they were drawing; when with a knowing wink the old man stopped, saying, "Sure Miss Bride honey, we're in luck; 'tis the foinest place out for seeing them throw their legs over these two bits of stone walls. Whisht now, they've found! Hark to the beauties."

It was a grand sight as they broke away far up on the hill-side and came streaming down towards us.

Mollie was in ecstasies, and old Kinsella nearly as much pleased as the child.

"Oh, 'tis the foinest sight intirely! Miss Mollie, my jewel, hark to them! Oh the

beauties! You could cover them with a kerchief! Ah, now, Miss Bride honey. Miss Lizzie, did ye ever see the like? old Renard's making straight for us, now; ah, ye old villain but 'tis good manners of ye to plase the ladies."

The fox crossed the road close to us, but he had baffled the hounds a little by running among some goats, and they were thrown off the scent for a few minutes.

Kinsella, with finger in ear, gave a shrill view hollo, which brought them down in the right direction.

Over the walls they jumped and climbed, some falling back in their hot haste, so that the whips and Lord Mohurry had much ado to keep some of the gentlemen from riding on to them.

"Ah, my grief! Keep back! keep back!" Lor," shouted the huntsman, "Mr. Colclough sor, be aisy. Ah, Holy Vargin, look at that now," for Mr. Vesey Colclough could restrain his hot young colt no longer, and flew the wall right among the pack, by good luck doing no damage.

His dashing wife in her scarlet habit rode up, calling out, "Bad manners to yer English horse, Vesey; sure one can see he has no education. Now, Lord Mohurry, give me a lead. Vesey is away now, catch him who can."

With a gay laugh she put her horse at the wall, not waiting for the lead, but topping it neatly by Lord Mohurry's side, and nodding

to us, they cleared the next wall as cleverly, followed closely by the huntsman, the two whips, and half a dozen more, including Larry and Louie Walker, who were both well mounted.

Lizzie cried out pettishly, "Oh, 'tis worth a guinea a minute. Bad luck to 'Fir Dorrig' to go lame, this day of all others. Ah, see now, Bride, Bagenal Harvey's horse will shirk it; no, well done!"

Mr. Harvey made his horse take the first wall fairly, but he jumped short at the second, and but for the stones giving way, would have had a bad fall; as it was he got over with a struggle, leaving a handy gap for the next comers.

"Ah, here comes Miss Kathleen with the masther," cried Kinsella. "Bedad, she's the jewel of the country; look at her now, 'tis the beautifullest rider she is. Ah, my beauty, my flower, and 'twas I taught ye; ah, steady now, not too fast at the wall. Ah, they're safe over, the heavens be praised," and the faithful old man drew almost a sob of relief as Kathleen's pretty mare "Queenie" jumped on and off the wall like a cat, by the side of father's old hunter.

"Ah, 'tis the beauty of the county Kathleen will soon be," cried Fanny Walker warmly; she was a good-natured girl if her looks were not much to boast of. Lizzie assented coldly, for she was a handsome girl, and maybe found it less to her mind that others should be bloom-

ing up to outshine her; but just then I saw her face light up eagerly as a gentleman came across the grass whom I did not know.

"Who is this?" I asked.

"'Tis a young Englishman, and he is staying at Tomadilly with the O'Connors."

"And it's Masther Sam's yellow colt he's riding; a bitter bad baste it is with a poor soft dhrop in it, that'll be the death of some one," remarked Kinsella. "Tis a blazing shame to put a stranger across it, but Masther Sam's just as wicked as a weasel."

The yellow colt, a half-bred, ugly animal, refused the wall. Its rider put it at the obstacle again with determination.

Showing the whites of its eyes viciously, the creature rose in a half-hearted way, caught its knees on the top, and fell into the lane, throwing the Englishman heavily, and all but rolling over him, as he lay insensible.

Kinsella hastily dragged him aside out of the way of some other riders, who were coming close behind him. The pace was too good for any to heed the accident, except Walter, who could not be in the front rank, as Eveleen was mounted on a slow, steady old pony of her uncle's, and he would not leave her.

Jumping off his horse, Walter looked at the stranger, and raised him.

"He is only stunned," he said. "Here, Bride, sit down on the stones, take his head in your lap. I'll cure him."

Taking out his flask, Walter skilfully administered some whiskey.

Lizzie Walker looked cross.

"Sure now, Walter, you're losing the hunt. Can't I do that as well as yourself?"

"Better, perhaps, Lizzie," laughed Walter. "Do you think I have not heard of the dance at Tomadilly, and who the English officer asked so often?"

"Whisht, you crathur," cried Lizzie, blushing violently. "He is coming to his senses."

"Are you better, Mr. Gordon?" asked Walter, who had evidently made the stranger's acquaintance at the cover-side.

Mr. Gordon rose to his feet with an effort, apologizing courteously to me, and declaring himself quite well, tried to remount, but in doing so staggered and almost fell, being still giddy and half stunned.

"You're not your own man yet," said Walter; "stay on the car awhile, Mr. Gordon, with the ladies; let me present you to my sister."

"But I'll lose the hunt, and I'm making you lose it too," said Mr. Gordon, irresolutely, as he bowed to me.

"Never fear," said Walter, "we'll catch the hounds again easy; they'll run round towards Killcullen—eh, Kinsella?"

"It's gospel truth, Masther Walter. Ride you and the lady down to the borreen, where the priest lives; you'll meet them."

Walter and Eveleen cantered off down the road, and Lizzie said:

"Now, Mr. Gordon, here's room for you. Ah! what's wrong with your arm?"

"I do not know. I did not feel it at first," he answered, trying not to show he was in pain.

Without a word, Lizzie opened a pocket knife, slit up his sleve, and felt his shoulder, from which the arm hung useless. Then turning abruptly to Kinsella, said:

"Give the colt's reins to Fanny there. Now, hold the gentleman so. Fast now, mind. Your arm's put out, Mr. Gordon. I'll right it."

"Aye, 'tis she bangs the world for the bone-setting," remarked Kinsella. "Now, Miss Lizzie honey, I've got him as tight as the devil grips a gouger."

In an instant Lizzie's strong dexterous hands held the injured shoulder. A sudden effort, a sickening snap, and the thing was done, and Mr. Gordon was apologizing to me that, all unknowingly in the pain, he had caught my hand and grasped it.

I bade him not mind, and Kinsella gave him some more whiskey, which indeed he needed, for he was deadly pale.

"That's right," said Lizzie, "stick to the whiskey, and you'll be fit for Ireland yet."

"Aye, by the powers, 'twill keep the cold out of your heart," said Kinsella. "It's true pottheen, bottled under the moonbeams."

Mr. Gordon laughed, and complimented

Lizzie on her skill in surgery, but she did not seem well pleased.

"Bride dear," whispered little Mollie, "when Larry's arm was hurt mother put it in my sash for a sling. Won't you do so for the gentleman?"

"Hark to the sense of the creature!" cried Fanny. "Do you hear that now, Mr. Gordon?"

"I hear, and I thank you, little lady," he said, taking off his hat to Mollie. "May I indeed be your knight, and wear your colours?"

Mollie blushed, and held out her sash.

Lizzie cried bluntly, 'Sure 'tis wasting the crame of your compliments to spend them on us. Faith, girls, Mollie does not know a word you're meaning, man."

"Will you then, in plain English, put the sling on for me?" said Mr. Gordon.

"Not I. I cannot do those finniking jobs. Bride there may do it."

Seeing Lizzie was vexed, though I knew not why, I tied up the torn sleeve with some ribbons from my dress, and fashioned a sling as best I could.

Lizzie hardly waited till I had done to say, "Let's get on now, or we'll miss all the sport."

Mr. Gordon remounted the yellow colt, and rode after us, and Lizzie said angrily:

"They're all alike, sure, Bride, because you've a soothering way with you. He thinks twice as much of your ribbons as my setting

his arm. I wonder who'd have done it for him, had I been away?"

"Not I!" I said, willing to please her. "You know, Lizzie, I'm a poor hand at binding wounds, and such work beside you or mother."

"Aye," said Lizzie more pleasantly, for her ill temper never lasted. "'Tis your mother is the skilful woman; just wonderful it is to see her, with her bits of white hands that look as if they were good for nothing at all, at all."

If there was any one in the world Lizzie admired and reverenced, it was my mother; just, I think, because she was so different to any one else Lizzie had ever known. Her sisters were content with their jolly untidy sort of life in the motherless home, where dogs and children tumbled up anyhow together; but Lizzie felt the change when she came to us at Ballydorough, and I think sometimes she fretted over it a little, and it made her sharp-tongued; but we all knew she was kind, and staunch at heart, and clever besides.

The borreen was muddy and the ruts deep, and we had to hold on again to the car lest the jolting threw us off; but at last it ended, and out on the moorland we drove among the big boulders, for we could see the hunt now; they had turned just as old Kinsella had predicted.

"Och my grief! the ould varmint is making for the quarry," cried Kinsella watching them. "Bad cess to ye for a knowing old fox; what do you spoil sport like that for?"

Sure enough as we got on the hill above the quarry the hounds came down full cry as if they would run their heads against the stones; but their prey had escaped into a deep cleft in the rock for which he had been making. There were far fewer riders now; but still a good number gathered round old Lord Mohurry, the men clamorous to dig out the fox, and Mrs. Vesey Colclough seconding them, but Kathleen and Eveleen Byrne, one on each side, were holding the old gentleman's rein, and begging for mercy for the poor beast in consideration of the sport he had shown.

"Ah, do now, Lord Mohurry! Ah, do now let him live!" pleaded Eveleen earnestly, her pretty grey eyes as eloquent as her lips. "Just to please me. Ah, don't kill him to-day, I would not like him killed to-day."

"Eh, Miss Eveleen?" laughed the handsome old man looking keenly at her. "And what is special of to-day over all days? Tell me that now, and maybe I'll say yes."

Eveleen blushed up crimson and saucy Kathie struck in:

"Ah now, what next will you be asking? See now, let him live, do, and I'll tell you all my secrets and maybe give you a kiss, and my best curl some day."

"Godfather dear," cried little Mollie, who was Lord Mohurry's special pet, "I'll give you three, four, ten kisses directly."

"That's not fair, Mollie, you're to be my wife," said Sam O'Connor, whom none of us liked overmuch and Mollie least of all.

"I won't! I don't like you!" said Molly passionately. "You set your dog at my dear kitten and killed it."

Lord Mohurry brought his horse to the car, and caught little Mollie in his arms, setting her in front of him.

"A bargain's a bargain, Mollie; pay me the kisses."

Molly turned up her rosy mouth lovingly to the dear old man, and gave him the kisses willingly enough, while the gentlemen laughed and cheered her.

"Ah, Kavanagh, you've no business with so many witches of daughters," said Lord Mohurry laughing too as he lifted Mollie back. "'Tis not safe to come near them. Kathleen, remember you're in my debt. I shan't claim forfeit of *you*, Miss Eveleen, for fear that long lad Walter there gets calling me out. Come, gentlemen, shall we draw the nine-rock gorse next?

Sam O'Connor had looked vexed at Mollie's retort on him, and now turned with a sneer to Mr. Gordon:

"I suppose Arthur, your English Macaronis don't dream of riding after they get the least

taste in life of a fall? I've had half a dozen myself this day; but then I'm Irish."

Arthur Gordon's eyes flashed angrily, but Loo Walker gave Sam a cut with her whip, remarking:

"Sure, Sam, if you're such an oumadaun you can't ride better than that you need not brag of it."

This turned a laugh against Sam, and Lizzie said in an undertone, "Never mind his folly, Mr. Gordon; sure we never need him."

But Arthur Gordon's spirit was up, and he answered her courteously, but decidedly, that he was quite recovered, and rode off.

"Don't spoil your bright eyes crying for him, Lizzie," said Larry mischievously. "I'll give an eye to him for you, and only charge one kiss."

"Get out of that, Larry, you plague of the world!" laughed Lizzie. "Bride, what will we do?"

"Go home, Miss Bride," said Kinsella. "We'll not see any more sport, and 'tis coming up soft weather."

Kinsella generally had his own way, so when the last of the riders disappeared, we drove in the opposite direction towards Ballydorough, and as Kinsella said, the rain was beginning just as we reached the park, and soon thickened to a wet afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

"The waves are wedded on the beach,
The shadows on the sea,
And like to like, and each to each,
And I love thee.
By night and day, in joy or grief,
Wilt thou love me?"

The great fireplace in the hall was glowing with the big logs as the short afternoon grew dusk. Of our lady guests none remained but the Walkers, and Lizzie and I were brewing egg-flip, Roman punch, and spiced wine for the hunters, who would surely be wet.

Little Mollie was curled up in the window-seat watching, and at last she cried out:

"Here is Walter, and some more."

We opened the door as they dismounted, and they came in gladly, for the fire looked cheery—Eveleen, Louie Walker, Walter, and Mr. Gordon.

"See, mother dear, I have brought you Mr. Gordon as a guest," said Walter. "He has had a bad fall to-day, and I told him you would be vexed if I let him go back twenty miles to Tomadilly."

"Indeed, Mrs. Kavanagh, I offer my apologies for thus intruding," said Mr. Gordon. "But your son insisted on my coming. I hope you will forgive me."

"It would have been harder to forgive you had you shown such doubt of our hospitality as to pass our door," replied mother kindly. "Come to the fire and sit down, Mr. Gordon; I am afraid your arm is badly hurt."

He was still carrying it in the sling made of Mollie's sash, and she ran up to him delighted saying:

"My sash did make you very better, didn't it?"

"Very better, Mollie," Mr. Gordon said smiling at her. "Without Miss Walker's surgery and your sash I do not know what I should have done."

"Oh, be done with your compliments and take some hot wine," remarked Lizzie, looking pleased enough, however. "Which will you have?"

She proffered him her tray with several steaming glasses. Mollie whispered confidentially:

"I grated all the nutmeg in the punch my own self; choose that."

"Choose it for me," he said, and very proud of the permission, Mollie with a most serious face selected a glass and gave it to him; and mother beckoning me aside bade me see the room next Walter's was ready, and the fire bright that the injured arm might be attended to.

I glanced back at the group as I left the hall. Walter and Eveleen were together in a

shadowy corner. Some of the girls had gathered round mother, all chattering at once to her, as she sat on the settle, with two cats striving for the post of honour on her lap, and the dogs jealously anxious to dethrone them and win her notice. On the opposite settle Mr. Gordon had drawn little Mollie to him, and stroked her curls while he talked to Lizzie Walker, who stood before him a splendid picture of strong, vigorous beauty; the fire glow heightening her rich colouring, the crimson flush of her cheeks, her full red lips, great black eyes, and clear brown skin all becomingly framed by heavy masses of wavy black hair, and her fully rounded erect figure was perfect now, though the day might come when she would grow too stout; but she was very attractive now, and Mr. Gordon evidently thought so. He too was dark, and rather unusually tall and broad-shouldered, his head well set and the features very clearly cut. From his dress and appearance he seemed evidently a man of good breeding, accustomed to very different society than that of the O'Connors, who were noted for their hard drinking and low tastes, which even the gentlemen of that rough age could not tolerate, and I rather wondered Mr. Gordon should be staying with them.

Wherever he came from clearly he admired Lizzie, and she was much flattered by his attentions, and did not even care for

Mollie diverting any portion of them, which the child having taken a fancy to him seemed inclined to do.

I did not neglect my business to speculate about Mr. Gordon, for the fire was dull, and I had to seek willows and fir-cones before it blazed satisfactorily.

We had always a few rooms ready for chance guests on hunting days, so I had but to glance round and see all was in order, the bed duly provided with lavender-scented sheets, and the red curtains drawn over the window. I pulled a great chintz-covered arm-chair to the fire, and ran in to see if Walter's fire was burning, with a regretful feeling that soon I should be no longer needed to look after his comforts, and I, who had been his first thought for all my life, must see another nearer and dearer to him.

I was just going down again when, hearing mother's voice, I waited; she and Walter were coming up with Mr. Gordon, so I went back into Walter's room. The Englishman was apologizing to mother for giving her so much trouble, and I heard her answer kindly:

"Not another word, Mr. Gordon; I will allow no one to take that arm out of the coat without my supervision. Do you think we never had a guest with bruises before to-day?"

They did not shut the door close, and I suppose an attempt was made to take off the

coat, for I heard a slight sound as of complaint sharply repressed. And mother said:

"It will not do, Walter, I must cut the coat across here. Sit down, Mr. Gordon, I cannot reach; there, now you will be better."

"By Jove! Gordon, it is swelled; I wonder you could ride all day," Walter remarked. "You could have had no use of that arm?"

"Not much, and I have had two or three falls; that colt can't keep its feet somehow."

"It's a brute, I know. Well, mother dear, what next?"

"I must exert my authority and order Mr. Gordon to bed, and when he is there I will doctor the arm and give him some supper."

I suppose Mr. Gordon objected, for mother said laughing:

"Do forget to be so polite, my dear sir, and just fancy I am your mother for this evening. Now, Walter, in ten minutes I shall return, so mind you have my patient ready."

She left the room, and I joined her in the passage.

"Ah, Bride dear, order Keeran to bring me a nice supper for Mr. Gordon; I must get something to rub his shoulder."

"Is he much hurt?"

Mother laughed as she said, "He is badly shaken of course, and wet, and shivering with the cold and pain, and he is far too polite to show how uncomfortable he is; and trying to look as if he were quite at ease,

that my feelings may not be shocked. His manners would please Uncle George, they are quite of the old school."

Mother went away to choose one of the many remedies she kept—for every lady had some share of medical knowledge in those days, when doctors were few—and I called Keeran, and saw to the arrangement of the supper-tray, and then went back to the hall.

Louie Walker went off to change her wet habit, and Lizzie and Fanny followed her to gossip.

Eveleen stood by the fire silently gazing into the burning embers, instead of chattering merrily as usual, and somehow I felt why and could not speak.

Though I loved Evie well, it was a heart-sorrow to give up my brother even to her, for he had been my first and best for all my life.

Presently I heard him coming back with mother, and leading her up to Eveleen, he put his arm round Evie, and drew her gently to mother, and she looked up with her sweet face between tears and smiles, like sunshine through the rain.

"Mother darling, you have given me your consent already," Walter said, "now welcome your new daughter."

Mother opened her arms and Evie clung to her saying:

"Ah, do love me, Mrs. Kavanagh, and teach me to be like Bride and Kathie; sure I'm not

good enough yet for Walter, but you know I'm motherless."

"Not motherless any more, my child," said mother, returning her kisses fondly.

I felt hard and cold as if no one thought of me, and jealous too; but Walter saw me as I stood in the shadow and came to me and kissed me tenderly saying:

"Bride dear, have you not one word for me, little sister? and you and I have been such friends always."

The gentle reproach in his tone went to my heart, and I repented me all at once of my wicked feelings, and kissed him and Eveleen too, though I could not speak yet.

She looked me in the face a minute and whispered:

"Bride darling, ah, do forgive me, I'll never come between you and him, and I can't help loving him."

Then I kissed her again, and said, "My dear sister Eveleen," and never any more did I grudge her Walter's love.

Mother felt her habit and said, "Naughty child, you are quite wet, run away now with Bride, or 'tis two patients there will be on my hands."

"Ah, how is Mr. Gordon?" asked Evie.

"I hope he will be better. I have left him to rest," answered mother. "He is badly shaken and should have been in bed some hours ago."

Presently Kathie came up; they had ridden long after many of the others gave in, but nothing ever seemed to tire her, and she chattered away gaily as she changed her habit and I smoothed out her tangled curly hair.

She was delighted at the news about Evie, and the other girls came in, and a fine noise we all made, all talking and laughing at once, "Oh, we'll have a jewel of a wedding!" being the end of almost everybody's speech.

Presently we all went to dinner, and there Walter and Eveleen were toasted by every one; and they all cheered till the roof rang, for plenty of the hunt and the master had dropped in, and the merry old gentleman was pleased enough, jesting with Eveleen about the fox whose life she had begged for.

The pipers were tuning up "The Rakes of Mallow" in the hall, before we left the dining-room; for Larry, always ready to take the floor, had ordered them up; and soon we were footing it gaily, even Lord Mohurry dancing as if he had not been on horseback since day-break, and he past seventy. And the music roused up the Englishman, for presently down he came, and, as he told mother, it was useless to scold him, for he would have got out of his grave to join the fun.

Now it was not to be expected he'd beat us at our own national dance, but he had a pretty notion of the steps, and he knew all sorts of country dances that were the mode in

England. And it turned out mother had learnt some when she was in London as a girl; so they set to work to teach us, and blind Clary, the fiddler, learnt the tunes from Mr. Gordon's whistling just as clever as you please.

If Lizzie expected Mr. Gordon to be at her beck and call, as he had been at Tomadilly, she was disappointed; for he devoted himself to mother, waiting on her, and anticipating every wish in the most courteous fashion; and afterwards we knew his own mother was a fine lady, who cared more for her lap-dogs than her son, and our mother's sweet kind ways were very new to him, and it seemed as if he could not make enough of her in consequence.

It amused father, who declared himself quite jealous; but all the same, finding Mr. Gordon disliked Tomadilly, and was just leaving the O'Connors, he asked him to remain at Ballydorough.

Lizzie and her sisters were also to stay a few days, so Lizzie was delighted; Loo remarked:

"It's just as well; for though Gordon and the O'Connors are cousins or something, 'tis a wonder Gordon has not had Sam out before breakfast for the way he jeered at him over the yellow colt."

Duelling was so common in my young days that Loo used the phrase quite naturally, and indeed most of her brothers had been out on

less provocation than Sam had given; but Mr. Gordon did not choose to resent the impertinence, as old Mr. O'Connor had married a cousin of his mother's. They had never met before and the Englishman had been disgusted by the O'Connors' habits.

Lizzie flattered herself that she was the attraction to Ballydorough, and just at first he showed her many civilities; but his manners were naturally remarkably courteous, and as she laid herself out to attract, he could hardly do otherwise than respond; but when they left he made no attempt to follow her, but settled down as if he belonged to the house, and finding out some most distant connection by marriage between his own and mother's relatives, declared himself a cousin, and insisted on our using his Christian name.

He loved all outdoor sport as well as father and Larry did, but also had Walter's taste for books, so fitted in between the two wonderfully, and was much more a man of the world in his ways and ideas than either of them, having spent all his early days in London, where he knew nearly every one, and had also served with his regiment abroad through two campaigns with some distinction.

Somehow I did not miss Walter half so much as I expected, for Arthur seemed to take his place in the house, and be like another brother to us all; and when we went riding or driving, even if Walter and Evie went

another way, we were still four, and could enjoy ourselves as well as ever.

Sometimes we all went to the neighbours' houses and had a dance, and spent a day or two, or after a hunt or coursing match we had a sudden incursion of guests, and danced or sang half the night, and day after day the gentlemen were off shooting, for there was plenty of game, and Arthur Gordon was so much one of the family he had quite forgotten to apologize for the length of his visit.

Later in the year we went to Tintern Abbey, the Colcloughs' home. Like our own house, part of it was a ruin and the owls and bats swarmed where the old monks had sung their vespers, and some said we danced over their graves, but if we did we meant them no disrespect.

It was a pleasant house and a change for us being so near the sea, for the tide came up an inlet close to the house. We all liked to go boating in the Bannow harbour, which was the opening of this piece of water.

The Colcloughs and our gentlemen used to try and spear the great soles and turbots that lived there ; it often ended in our boat sticking on a sand bar till the tide came and floated us off again. Or we sailed farther out into the bay, and visited the islands where people lived lonely lives enough through the winter, often cut off for weeks together from any communication with the mainland, when the

sea was rough, and on one that was not inhabited provision of food and firing was always kept for shipwrecked sailors.

Sometimes when the tide served we landed under the cliffs and cooked the fish in a cave, got shells on Bannow beach and climbed up the cliff to the old ruined church, all that remained of the town that lay under the waves below us, buried all in one night, it is said, by sand and shingle rolling in over it.

It was the last merry visit we were to have to Tintern; but it is well, perhaps, that the future is hidden, or we would forget to-day's sunshine in dreading the morrow's storm.

We were sorry to say good-bye, and I remember as if it were yesterday how handsome Vesey Colclough looked as he stood at the door with his arm round madam, his wife, as they waved their handkerchiefs till we were out of sight; and John, the master of Tintern by him. It was a sunny day for so late in the year, and Bannow Bay had but just ripple enough to catch the sunbeams round the Keroe Islands which lay near shore; while the greater islands, called the Saltees, stood out clear against the sky defined in soft shades of purple against the pale clear blue; away to the right the crags of Bag and Bun Point showed out darkly in contrast to the sweep of bright green sward on the top of the cliff.

A great flock of screaming sea-birds were wheeling across the bay in pursuit of fish,

and one or two tan-sailed fishing-boats came creeping out from the little village of Fethard, near Bag and Bun.

"I have never seen a fairer view abroad or at home," Arthur said to me. "I shall often remember it when I am back in England, far enough from Bannow and from you. Bride, shall you miss me a little when I am gone?"

I could hardly realize that he would have before long to leave us, for he seemed so much a part of our home life now, and the sudden question brought some foolish tears to my eyes, but determined he should not see them, I turned and looked away over the sea as if I had not heard what he said. Father was driving us in the coach we used for long distances with four horses, and we were all on the roof but mother and Mollie, so Arthur said no more just then, but accepted Kathie's challenge to sing the second to one of Tom Moore's gayest songs, and she had a pretty clear voice; indeed, we could all sing well enough, and the others taking up parts, song followed song, till, without a moment's warning, down came a drenching shower which stopped the music and gave Arthur an excuse for drawing his great military cloak over me and himself too, till we were quite hidden, and under its shelter he whispered:

"Bride darling, I love you so much; do you love me a little too, my sweetheart?"

And I said, "Yes."

CHAPTER V.

"These are grand people, one would say,
To see her so careless and cold to-day."

FATHER scolded us both, saying in his young days gentlemen asked the opinion of their elders before they came courting, and that as Arthur's father was dead, he must gain his mother's consent before it was an acknowledged engagement.

Arthur urged that he was of age and independent.

"Be that as it may, my daughter goes to no family on sufferance," returned father. "Already I feel myself to blame in having forgotten she was no more a child, and throwing you so much together."

"What objection have you, sir, to me or my position?" Arthur asked rather warmly.

"None whatever, Gordon, but I doubt if you have chosen wisely for yourself. You are young and the time may come when you will regret marrying with one who knows nothing of your world and its fashions."

"It is just because she is so different from the women of the world, sir, that I love her. I have known enough of them in my time."

"Then, if your mind is made up, a little delay will not change it, Gordon."

"It will not, sir; but you are taking my word for my fortune and position, why will you not accept it on that point also?"

"Because the one is a matter of business easily proved, the other affects the child's happiness for life; Bride would be happier poor than slighted or unbeloved."

"Trust me, sir, she will never be either if you give her to me; and, as you wish it, I will write to my mother and also to my lawyer, who was my guardian; I remember there is some proviso about my marriage that you ought to know."

"Do so, Gordon, and if all goes well there is no one I shall more gladly call son than yourself, and the mother has adopted you already."

"Thank you, sir; I began to think you objected to me for some reason."

"I should say you know better than that," father said, smiling; "and when your writing is done, you had, I think, best accept this invitation. I can allow no courting till all is settled."

Lord Mohurry had sent an express to ask all the gentlemen to go over for a week's shooting to his place. The place suited Walter, who acted as father's agent, and had business on that side the county. Eveleen had returned to her uncle's house, for their

wedding day was fixed for a near date, so the invitation was accepted, and Arthur and Larry stayed with Lord Mohurry till the former received answers to his letters; and if the good-natured old gentleman suspected anything he made no remarks.

The lawyer's letter was brief and business-like. He reminded Arthur that he was not to be considered of age till he was twenty-five, and that his father specially wished him not to marry till that age, but would not make it binding; only he would, until then, have a very moderate income, and could make but a small settlement. After twenty-five he would inherit all his property, with the exception that during his mother's life she had a very handsome dower. He inclosed a letter from the late Colonel Gordon left with him to be given Arthur when he thought of marriage.

It was very short, but most earnestly worded and affectionate; praying Arthur to deliberate well before he took the most important step of his life, and was a strange contrast to Lady Rachel's careless epistle, in which she bade her son please himself; it was nothing to her as he was his own master. She added that as Irish beauties were to be the fashion, if his wife had good points, she, Lady Rachel, would be delighted to form her style and present her to the world; but if he had fallen enamoured of some raw, gawky, freckled creature, she

trusted he would go into seclusion, and not inflict her on his relatives.

The letter was so heartless, I could hardly believe it written by a mother, and I felt if it were a sample of the world I was to go to, I had no spirit for it, and were best at home.

It vexed Arthur also not a little, but he only said to father:

"Do you still wonder at my not caring to marry a fine lady, sir?"

In his heart, father did not, but he was too wise to say so, and answered:

"This letter, as I read it, conveys your mother's consent, Gordon, therefore I freely give mine also. Of the rest we can speak later."

With a few more kind words father dismissed us, and we went out together.

I could not help feeling discouraged by Lady Rachel's letter. In the dear old home we were all so happy and loved each other so much, that I was all unaccustomed to slights, and the tears rose to my eyes in thinking of it.

Arthur presently discovered them and I confessed my fears.

"Bride dear," he said, "if you love me as I love you will not that be enough for you? I will protect you, darling, from all the world; and, sweetheart, you are too pretty and dainty to fear comparison even with the women of that world."

I was but half convinced, and sighed:

"If I were but as lovely as Kathie, or had but her spirit."

"Spirit enough she has; I should live in a powder magazine," laughed Arthur. "The first time my mother took her to task, she would box my ears if I did not defend her, and do whatever she was bid not, ten times the more because she had been chid, and then have all the men in London wild after her."

Kathleen had been close behind the tree, where we were speaking and heard his words.

"So that's the best you can say, sir!" she cried. "Take that for your bad manners."

And giving him a blow with the wet fern leaves she carried, she sprang laughing up the tree, and on to a piece of the castle ruin, and from thence looked down triumphant, knowing the old wall would not bear his weight.

"Kathie darling, sure it's not safe, come back," I said.

But light as a fairy the pretty gay creature ran along the wall, climbed up into the broken tower, and vanished, singing mischievously:

> "Ah, my dear Misther Brallagan,
> Why don't you follow Judy Callagan?
> Over the bog land, into the sea,
> He must come who'd wed with me."

Then peeping out among the ivy boughs high up the ruin, she suddenly shook down a shower of drops off the wet leaves on Arthur's upturned face.

And as he called out laughingly that he would have his revenge later, she came out on the very top of the tower; and measuring her distance at a glance, sprang like a fawn across on to the leads of the house, and so in at a window on the roof, and was gone.

"'Tis more like a sprite than a woman," said Arthur. "He will be a bold man who weds her."

"I do not know why," I cried hotly; "sure there is no one lovelier or more sweet-tempered in the barony, and she is true as steel."

"Little champion," he said, smiling down at me, "I will allow Kathleen has every charm, but I prefer her sister for all that, if you have no objection? But seriously, darling," Arthur went on, "since my father died I have never had a home till I came here. You, who have had so many to love you always, cannot realize the blank it has been in my life. Ah, sweetheart! when we marry, you will not grow into a woman of the world, will you?"

"Is it I do so?" I said. "Sure, all that I dread is that my country ways will vex you, Arthur. You have none to compare me with here, and a daisy is well enough in the fields, but it's a poor thing among the garden flowers.

"You do not trust me wholly yet, Bride," he answered reproachfully. "Sweet, I have seen women enough before you, to know my mind,

and I did not watch my father's wasted life for nothing."

I knew he had been very fond of his father, and guessed the marriage had not been happy, for he hardly ever named his mother; but I did not like to question him. However, after a pause, he said:

"Come into the woods with me, Bride, and I will tell you how my father died."

So we wandered on under the trees now almost leafless, and Arthur told me how Colonel Gordon, who had been a distinguished officer, married Lady Rachel Landless, a woman younger than himself, and wonderfully handsome; and she cared for neither husband nor child, but only for gaiety, and jewels, and rich dresses; and though her husband lavished everything on her that love and wealth combined could give her, she was as cold to him as a marble statue. But he was so loyal to her though she was indifferent to him, that he tried to make every one believe her perfect, even though at last when his health gave way from his many wounds, she utterly neglected him, and hardly visited his room, leaving him to his servant, and what care Arthur—then a mere boy—could give. And on the last evening of his life she would not believe the end was so near; and called him fanciful and selfish for praying her to stay with him and give up a grand masked ball.

So he died all alone, but for Arthur, who,

tired out, had fallen asleep on the bed by his father.

It was a sad story of a great love wasted; and I could not wonder that Arthur still felt strongly about it, and had no very real affection for the lady who treated her son much as she had always done her husband.

"But you make your home with her, do you not?" I asked.

"I stay with her when I am in town, would be a more correct way of putting it, little one. Oh yes, we keep up appearances admirably; and really, my lady likes me better than when I was a boy, and wanted her to interest herself about my doings as some mothers do."

"What made you visit Ireland?" I asked, wishing not to discuss so unpleasant a subject as his relations with his mother.

"My guardian angel, I should think, Bride, though old red-nosed O'Connor is not my idea of a seraph quite. The old man had asked me more than once, and I wanted to break with some men who were doing me no good; so I came over, but I could not stand Sam and the lot altogether, and the old man is rarely sober; and I was going back to get in bad ways probably."

"I am glad you stayed," I whispered.

"Ah, Master Sam did not mean to do me so good a turn in giving me that wretched nag; I did not feel so grateful that evening,

though, when I thought I had to find my way back some twenty miles on that worn and stumbling beast."

"So Walter's invitation was not unwelcome."

Arthur laughed a little as he said:

"With no disparagement to Walter's hospitality, it was pretty clear he wanted Eveleen to himself and was glad to get some one to take Loo Walker off their hands, and I was feeling so bad-tempered and uncomfortable, if I had had the least idea where Tomadilly lay I should have gone off there, I really believe. Riding a downright bad horse and getting a few falls does not improve one's state of mind."

"You were polite enough when you appeared, at any rate."

"Well, a man must have been hopelessly out of sorts not to feel better for such a pleasant welcome as that great hall fire, and all you girls in your white dresses round it, and the dogs and cats basking, and your mother's kindness."

"Which you did your best to refuse."

"I was unaccustomed to such attentions, though I was very grateful both to her and the lady who went to see my room was in order."

"How did you know that, Arthur?" I cried blushing.

"Not by the black art, dear. I noticed

when I came in that you had some flowers in your dress, and I found them by my fireside; and likewise, Walter prosaically remarked, 'Confound Bride! she must have taken away the bellows.'"

"What a poetic finish," I said laughing. "Brothers don't think so much of those attentions, you see."

"Walter and Larry have been spoilt all their lives," Arthur replied. "Bride, I wonder if I am selfish in thinking I can make up to you for taking you from such a happy home: but I cannot give you up."

"I have not asked you to," I answered, too shy to tell him how I loved him, but I think he guessed, for he was content.

CHAPTER VI.

"I love the king, as brave men can
Who groan beneath a fetter;
But then I'm but an Irishman,
So love my country better."

We had been walking through the thick of the wood as we talked, and suddenly we heard a sound as of some one sobbing bitterly, and as we made our way through some thick yew trees we came to an open space where stood a girl in the country dress of a short red petticoat with a blue cloak, her bright hair was undone and falling loose about her neck, and her pretty face was all disfigured with tears. By her stood a fine boy in the militia uniform.

"A lovers' quarrel," whispered Arthur.

"It is Norah Clary and her bachelor," I said, and we were moving away, but Tom Corish caught sight of me.

"Miss Bride, Miss Bride honey," he cried, "come and spake a word to Norah for me; sure she thinks all the world of you, miss dear; and if only you'd pacify her with me I'd serve you day and night on my bare knees."

"What is wrong, Tom?" I asked, for Norah only sobbed the harder.

"I will go to the fairy well and wait," whispered Arthur; "I think she will tell you when I am gone, Bride."

"Ah, sure 'tis a kind thought of his honour," cried Tom; "'tis he should be an Irishman. Now, Norah, me heart's joy, is this the pattern of your manners? Spake to Miss Bride, alannah."

"How can I spake, Tom?" cried Norah suddenly, with her fine eyes flashing. "Would ye have me turn informer?"

Tom seemed staggered, but went on:

"Sure if I am drawn for the militia, darlin', Masther Larry's own self is going too. Isn't that thrue, miss dear?"

"Quite true, Tom, and we'll hope they will soon be back, Norah," I said, for I could not understand the grief which caused such heart-scalding sobs as the poor girl was drawing.

"That's not my throuble, Miss Bride, mashree, and Tom knows it," sobbed Norah passionately; "'tis just as a cloak he says it, and he knows my tongue is locked and chained. But oh, Miss Bride, mavourneen, as you love your husband that will be, and your hopes of heaven, use your words to turn Tom from what he's meaning in his heart's core, but don't ask what it is."

In her trouble the poor child had thrown herself at my feet, her beseeching eyes fixed on my face, her hands clasping mine.

With all the words I could find I begged Tom to take Norah's grief to heart, and give up whatever troubled her so; for I was sure it could not be right or she would not be so moved; and Tom listened and thanked me, but all the same I felt he did not mind in his heart, and that I could not get at him. So sadly I moved away, though Norah thanked me warmly, and I went to find Arthur, and told him my tale.

He looked graver than I expected.

"Bride dear," he said, "somehow I cannot but fear that we are treading on thin ice in this country, and unseen mischief is going on that will burst out one day. Oh, if we were all safe in England, or if I could marry you at once, my darling."

He held me close, and I felt so safe I only laughed, saying:

"Wexford is safe enough, dear; and even if there were danger, father would stay by his county, and how could we leave him? mother would break her heart away from him."

"Here he comes," said Arthur; "let us go out in the road to him."

Father came riding through the wood so wrapped in thought he did not see us till old Rollo neighed to me.

"Get off and walk with us, father," said I. "We were going home."

"Eh, my bird, three is not company, is it?"

"Ah, don't be teasing me," laughed I, but Arthur, who still looked troubled, burst out abruptly:

"Mr. Kavanagh, sir, do you think the country is quiet?"

Father did not speak for a minute, then he said quietly:

"That is the question I have asked myself for the last few weeks, my boy, and sure it is one I cannot answer, nor can I agree with the other magistrates."

"Why not?" said Arthur.

"Gordon, for so young as you are, you have a wise head," returned my father, "and I do not mind talking to you; but mind, children, you must keep silence. No doubt there are secret societies among us plotting treason, and I cannot believe the harsh measures the magistrates are taking will do aught but just drive the boys to rebellion."

"What measures, sir?"

"Flogging, imprisoning, maybe worse. Only yesterday I saw a lad of fifteen condemned to fifty lashes to make him confess, and it's my belief sorra a taste the creature knew what they asked him, and O'Connor was for imprisoning his sister, a little frightened colleen not twelve years old."

"Oh, you did not let them, father?"

"No, it was too much; but, Bride, a poor lad confessed to me last week that the rebels had made him pay fourteen pence, and buy a

pike, and be sworn in an united Irishman, and the terror of it has killed him, he died this morning."

Father looked grave and sad, as if he felt yet more than he said, but just then three or four labourers passed and greeted him with "God save your honour, and good-night, Miss Bride dear; and heaven's saints bless you, Miss Bride, for the medicine for the grawl; sure he's quite another boy this day. And the sow yer honour gave me has got ten of the foinest little bonneens iver ye saw. Good-night, sor, good-night."

Father looked back at them with a smile as they went on their way.

"Whatever chances," he said, "they can't say I've been a hard landlord; I think they would stand by me and mine."

"Ah, sir, in France how many innocent suffered with the guilty?" cried Arthur, for the reign of terror was very fresh in all our hearts, and men shuddered as they thought of it.

"At least, if you will not leave Ireland yourself, let me take Bride, and then there will be a home for the rest if the worst should come."

"Arthur, by your father's will, he wished you not to marry until you are a year older than you are this day; he foresaw wisely that so young a man might act hastily, and in his hot youth fetter himself for life

with a galling chain; would you disobey his wishes?"

"He never foresaw all this, sir."

"All what, Gordon?" said father smiling. "A few alarms which may be groundless, a few reports which have no sure foundation."

Arthur was silent if unconvinced; father went on:

"Lad, you have known Bride a short time, a year will test your truth. Nay, I am not doubting you," he added, smiling as Arthur's eyes flashed.

"Walter's betrothal is of no longer standing, yet he will wed next week," said Arthur.

"Aye, but he has known Eveleen for years, and but for her only brother going to the Indies, they would have waited longer."

"Well," said Arthur slowly, "my father's wish is binding on me, and so, as you hold it also best, I will say no more, sir. Only I cannot set aside my right to protect Bride, if necessary, in spite of all wills, and I know if my father were here he would approve."

"Well said, Arthur," answered my father; "and if harm come, which may God avert, sure I will be the first to give the child into your care."

We reached the courtyard as he spoke, where little Mollie was riding her pony under old Kinsella's supervision.

"Masther George is here, sor," said Kinsella to my father.

"Masther George" was my father's half-brother, and considerably older than himself. He lived some twenty miles off on the family estate. Ballydorough had come to my grandfather through his second wife, our own grandmother, so went in due course to my father.

"Masther George" was of course unmarried or the old servants would have given him the more dignified title of Mr. Kavanagh. He was a great contrast to my tall handsome father, being small and very slender and neat in figure. He had spent most of his life in London, and always yet wore powder, and the daintiest of lace ruffles on his shirts, and the nicest apparel; but though they were so different he and father loved each other well.

CHAPTER VII.

"I read you for a bachelor, sir,
By your neat apparel,
And prim ways."

Uncle had lain aside his riding gear and sat in a chair by the hall fire chatting to mother, but he rose as we entered and saluted me with a low bow saying:

"So, so, Miss Bride, I hear I am to have another nephew. Ah, Frank, the epidemic is running through the family; I suppose Mollie will be having suitors soon?"

"Mind you do not take it, uncle," said I.

"Heaven forbid," said he with a comical face; "so long as I have been preserved from such a fate it would be too serious; but present me in due form, if you please, niece, to Mr. Gordon."

This ceremony over uncle looked Arthur over approvingly, but said drily:

"The son of my old acquaintance, Lady Rachel Landless. Ah, sirs, how time slips by. To think that lovely creature should own a tall slip of a boy like you. Oblige me, sir, by turning me your profile; look down, please," and as Arthur obeyed merrily, uncle added:

"There is a look, just a bligh of your

mother, but she was a very Venus. Ah!" (and the old gentleman kissed his hand as to some one far away). "How we young bloods used to crowd the steps to see her go down to her chair. Is she much changed, my dear young friend?"

"I am no fair judge," laughed Arthur, "not having seen her as Lady Rachel Landless; but to my mind there are few so handsome even now."

"A very Ninon de l'Enclos with the secret of perpetual youth. Well, old and decrepit as I am, 'tis refreshing to hear of old friends."

"Old and decrepit indeed!" cried Kathie. "Why, you know very well, uncle, you mean to dance us all down at the wedding; sure we girls will all be quarrelling for you, and I can tell you we mean to dance at your wedding yet."

"May your head never ache till that day, Niece Kathie," returned uncle. "But one mercy at least I may be thankful for, and that is that you cannot marry me."

"Really now 'tis too bad," cried Katie, laughing. "Mother dear, won't you say a word for me? Uncle, what makes you so set against wedding?"

"The warning it is to see such a madcap as yourself," said father, "and think he might call you daughter."

"Nay, it was because your mother was an

only daughter, and so I could never find her equal," said uncle, with a little bow to mother.

"Thank you, George, she said smiling; "I think you were too polite to choose one, for fear of disappointing the rest."

"Oh, did you ever hear the like?" cried father. "Compliments are as plenty as blackberries in autumn."

"Niece Bride," said uncle, "there is an excellent recipe for buttered claret in this house."

"And here is some, uncle," said I; for unperceived I had been away to mix his favourite beverage.

The old gentleman tasted it, and smiled approvingly, saying:

"Ah, Mr. Gordon, you are a youth of discernment, I see. Bride takes after her mother in housewifely skill; and let me tell you, boys, that wit and beauty are all-powerful in other men's wives, and there's always plenty about; but don't you look out for it when you choose your own. A good turf on the hearth at home is better than fireworks."

"Sure you're wasting your discourse, uncle," said Larry, "except, of course, on my poor self; they are all paired off here like so many turtle doves."

"Ah, Master Larry, you graceless child, are ye there? Where is Walter?" asked uncle.

"Writing a love-letter longer than last

Sunday's sermon," laughed Larry. "Whisht, though, here he comes."

Walter shook hands with uncle, who remarked:

"Well, my boy, as 'tis useless my advising you, I've just come to see ye take a leap in the dark. Ah! lads, lads, there's time yet to repent, and follow my good example; sure 'tis

> 'Needles and pins, needles and pins,
> When a man marries his trouble begins.'"

"Now be quiet, uncle," cried Kathie clasping her two hands over his mouth. "How can you be perverting the creatures' minds like that? And two of them as good as married."

"Well, madcap, I may as well spare my breath to cool my punch, for if it does not daunt them to think the women that own them might turn out like you. Saint Senanus himself would be wasting his time preaching to them. Ah! there is the dinner-bell."

CHAPTER VIII.

"A rustic bridal. Ah! how sweet it is
To sounds of joyous melodies
That touch with tenderness the trembling bosom.
A band of maidens
Gayly frolicking
A band of youngsters,
Wildly rollicking."

A GRAND wedding did the Walkers see fit to to give Eveleen and Walter. The fun was kept up for three days, and though there was always plenty at our house, the tables here were just loaded with everything. Whole pigs and lambs, fowls sitting one on the other in piles, and great salmon abounded. "Lashins and lavins for all," as old Mr. Walker said, and outside an ox roasted whole and whiskey in hogsheads.

"If they piled the meats one on the other," they would be as high as Enniscorthy steeple," remarked uncle, who had been much in Paris and preferred small made dishes.

But anyhow every one seemed happy and merry; out of the house, and in, the fun was fast and furious, dancing everywhere; and Lizzie, who had never been quite friends with me since she knew Arthur liked me best, was just her own self again, and good reason for it: the English major from Wexford was

following her as if he were her shadow, so she was proud as a horse with two tails and could forgive me.

There was a droll thing happened on the wedding-day morning. Mr. Walker had had a room newly plastered, and it was not dry, but the Walker boys and half a score more went in to make a night of it, and have a big drink, and a dozen or more just slept there overcome with the strength of the punch.

Next morning Larry, Ted O'Hara, and Bill Walker went to rouse them, and what did they find, but Sam O'Connor and two more had slept with their heads against the wall, and it had set, and they were just stuck fast, and looked like the bas-reliefs uncle sets such store by, only not so handsome. Oh, but they did swear, and the more angry they grew the more Larry and the rest laughed, till they brought all the other men, and at last the bridesmaids must needs have a peep, and I would not be sure that the bride herself did not also.

Well, there was no time to stay, for the bride was dressed, and it was late, so away we all went, and they were chipped out somehow, but Sam lost half the skin of his cheek, and the rest were all more or less wounded, and sorrow a taste of pity did any of the girls give them.

Walter looked a gallant bridegroom, and Eveleen like a May morning, all smiles and

blushes, and we had a grand dance after; but somehow it clung to me like a cloud now that Arthur was leaving now directly, and he felt it too, I think, for he whispered often:

"Oh, Bride, my darling, if it were but our wedding day too!"

And the parting came so soon after, but I cannot write about that. Those that have gone through the same will know of their own hearts, and the others may thank God that He has spared them a great pain.

I thought to slip back just to my old place when he was gone, but somehow it was not ready for me. Larry, and even little Mollie, had turned to Kathie, while I was so taken up with Arthur, and Walter and Eveleen were, of course, just all and all to each other, and Eveleen had even taken my place in helping mother, wishing to learn of her for the time their own house would be ready in the spring, for her uncle's house had been no good school.

So I felt desolate and moped, till one day mother found me crying on the hall window seat, and thinking I was fretting for Arthur tried to comfort me, till I told her all my heart trouble.

"Ah, Bride darling," said mother gently, "look at it differently; 'tis all for the best, we are learning to spare you. You have been the jewel of daughters to us. Now, my child, you must consider to be as good a wife."

"But what can I do, mother?" said I dis-

consolately. "You say I am a good housekeeper, and have little to learn."

"That is true for you, Bride, but Arthur is nearly as fond of books as Walter himself, and when the first summer days of love are over he will not be satisfied with just a woman to see to his table and mend his shirts, as many would."

"What would you have me do, then?" I asked.

"You see, Bride dear, now Eveleen and little Mollie, the blessing, want to learn all womanly matters, it gives you leisure for other things that I could ill spare you for before, so now, darling, it will please Walter to help you study when Evie is busy, and if you think how it will please Arthur also, I am sure you will not find it hard or dull."

My wise, good mother, how cleverly she saw what all wanted. In teaching me, Walter forgot to chafe if Eveleen were too long in stillroom or linen closet, and she kissed me and thanked me over and over for thus contenting him.

As for Kathie, she just went in and out like a wild bird, and grew lovelier and more wilful and bewitching daily, and no one sought to change her.

She was the sunshine of the house, and kept up all our hearts, for indeed as the winter wore away there were disquieting tidings.

Rumours of midnight drillings in lone

places, of pikes and other weapons being made and stored up, of disaffection everywhere.

Mother said little about it but went about as usual in her household serene and gentle, and ministered to the poor and sick around, and Eveleen followed in her steps and grew dearer to us all daily, and Walter loved the very ground she trod on, and small wonder. Only if either father or Walter were out later than usual, mother and Evie would watch and wait with an aching dread; for after all women have the hardest part to play, though it seems easy maybe to remain safely at home and know the men that we own are braving danger, but it's a heart-wearing time all the same.

CHAPTER IX.

"The trumpet's voice hath raised the land,
Light up the beacon pyre!
A hundred hills have seen the brand,
And waved the sign of fire."

The country was proclaimed at last and put under martial law. Father, Lord Mohurry, and one or two more still deprecated the harsh measures of the magistracy generally; but they were in the minority, and seizures, imprisonment, and whippings went on. There was still so much affection shown to us personally by our tenants that it was very reassuring.

Norah Clary, with whose bachelor I had interceded, was always finding an excuse to come to see me.

Poor girl! I could not fathom her distress, but I could comfort her, for she was parted from her lover and so was I.

She was more to be pitied, though, for I felt she could not wholly trust to Tom Corish though she loved him dearly.

Larry had not joined the militia, for old Lord Mohurry, who had been in the dragoons, got up a corps of volunteer cavalry, called "The Foxhunters corps," and would have Larry join him. A dashing set they were, of all the best mounted men in the county, and they chose a

very handsome uniform, so it was a beautiful sight to see them drilling. And the young ladies made much of them, for though such a cloud hung over us all there were still dances and merry-makings.

Uncle George said in his dry way, "Aye, aye, sure Nero fiddled while Rome was burnt."

But all the same he issued invitations for a great dinner, for gentlemen only, and Walter and Larry went.

Larry went back to camp after, but Walter returned to us graver than was usual with him.

"Walter boy, what's wrong with you?" asked father at once.

Walter glanced at mother, Eveleen, and I, and was silent.

Mother spoke gently but firmly, "My son, if you have ill news, let us share it: it is false kindness to keep us women in the dark to fret our hearts out with wondering. Am I not right, my daughters?"

"Oh yes, yes!" we girls both cried, and Evie clasped her arm through Walter's and smiled up bravely to him.

"It's just this," said Walter. "Last night at uncle's table I heard more open talk of an uprising than I had ever dreamt to hear among our friends, and father, Colclough, Harvey, and Hay; though never a word of plain speaking was there on *the other side.*"

Father nodded his head and asked significantly, "Will I name a few others for you

who were there? Old Grogan of Johnstown."

"That dear, kind old man?" cried mother surprised out of her tranquillity.

"Sure, Mary love, I only said he was dining with George," replied father, but Walter's face told more.

Father added, "Also Keogh, Sheer and his brother, and Hattan."

"Father, how did you know all this?" exclaimed Walter.

"Walter boy, I know nothing," answered father; "but a feather shows the way of the wind sometimes." What do you know for certain?

"Truly nothing," answered Walter; but I just felt I was among a lot of unavowed conspirators."

"What said Uncle George?" asked Eva.

"Just made a joke of it all, as usual, and said it would be like the battle of the fairies that comes off on midsummer night on Knockadhu Hill, and then went on drily, 'Well, Keogh, either you or I will evidently have to be hung, as we take different sides, so let's have a bargain; you'll cut me down, or else I'll cut you down—at least if we have a knife handy.' So they all laughed and drank his health in a bumper, and so it ended."

"I think, Walter," said father, "you had best sit down and write to the chief secretary; but name no names, give him your impressions."

"What good do you think it will do?" asked mother.

"None at all," answered father coolly, "but duty is duty."

"Right, sir," said Walter, and he and Eva went off together.

Nothing came of the letter, as father said, and the lovely spring days brought out the flowers, and the tender green of the young leaves that dance in the sunshine like children.

The park at Ballydorough was just as blue as the sky with the blue bells, and the primroses were passing their prime.

Mollie and I were gathering bunches for mother, who loved spring flowers best of all.

The park was never so beautiful as in May, when every gnarled old crab and thorn was crowned with a glory of rose or white blossom, and we still stayed to gather more though our hands were full.

"Here comes Norah," cried Mollie, running to her and calling: "Where are the bantams' eggs you promised Norah? Have you got them?"

"Yarra, no, my jewel. May every sunrise increase your happiness, Miss Bride. My own darling lady, where's the masther and Masther Walter?"

"At home, Norah, both of them."

"Ah, praise God for that same!"

"What is wrong, Norah?" I asked, for I saw the poor girl was very pale, and her

usually neat dress disordered as if she had come far and fast.

"Let me sit down, miss dear; sure I'm spent with running, and sorra bit or drop's passed my lips the day."

I whispered to Mollie to run and fetch food for Norah.

Recovering herself a little, Norah whispered, looking round as if she feared listeners:

"Miss Bride alannah, sure ye've been kinder to me than my own flesh and blood. God remember it to ye. There will be bloody work to-night. The boys are rising."

"How do you know, Norah?" I cried.

"Don't ask me, miss dear. Maybe I have broke faith in saying so much; but sure I'd have come on my bare knees to serve you and yours, that never gave me aught but kindness."

She was rising as if to go, but catching her arm I poured out question after question.

Norah shook her head.

"Alannah, don't ask me for the love of God's truth; but if there's a fire lit to-night on the hill of Corrigrua, and on Boulavogue, you'll know I'm no liar."

Mollie ran up now with some food and milk for Norah, who took it thankfully, kissing and blessing the pretty birdeen; then saying, "Go your ways in, Miss Bride, at once. God bless ye and save ye."

Norah went away, and I hastened to the house to tell father.

Sure enough, from the roof that night we saw the tokens Norah had foretold blazing on many hills, and it was with heavy hearts we went to bed.

Father had quietly strengthened all parts of our house by degrees during the winter, and also he had laid in stores of ammunition and muskets. Now he spoke openly to the servants and bade those go who wished.

Only one went—the lad who worked under old Keeran the butler, Peter Murphy by name.

So we resolved to remain at our home, for father still believed it safer than the towns, as it was rather far from the heart of the trouble, though, alas! at night we could see fires blazing, some lit by the insurgents, some houses burnt by the yeomen in revenge, for war makes men into savages.

Walter wanted to join Lord Mohurry, and Eveleen did not try to prevent it, though we felt it would be like tearing out her heart to part from him; but Lord Mohurry said positively it was his duty to stay with father, and no greater harm could be done than for those who could hold their own houses to quit them, as each was a rallying point for the loyalists, and might be a place of safety for those who had no other shelter.

Old Kinsella, who knew everybody, went about the country and brought back terrible tales of murders.

Our dear old friend and relative the rector of Kilmuckridge fell one of the first. He had warning that his house would be attacked, and at last after a brave defence it was fired, and then it was promised they should be saved if all resistance ceased; but though many of the rebels would have kept faith with Dr. Burrowes, some more cruel murdered the good man before the very eyes of his wife, and ran poor Larry (his son and our Larry's namesake) through with a pike, though he did not die then of it, and the poor widowed mother with four other little ones clinging to her skirts, had much ado to get shelter at all for them that night, and next day they were carried as prisoners to Castle Annesley, which was in the rebels' hands; so we could hear nothing more of them.

At Ferns we heard the bishop's palace was entirely plundered and wrecked, more being destroyed than carried away.

Kinsella even managed to visit the camps on the hills, for being, as he said, "neither a flea nor a fly nor a Connaught pig," he contrived to come and go as it pleased him pretty much, and a curious account he gave of the rebels' quarters.

For cover they had curtains, carpets, chintz, and all kinds of furniture stuffs plundered from many great houses.

"Didn't I see Mrs. O'More's drawing-room curtains, ma'am, wid my own eyes, them as

she set such store by, hanging over a Wattle with the big red roses on 'em just as natural as loife; and half a dead cow, the cratur wrapped up in a pink silk gowntail that I lay my hand has swept your flure at your parties, ma'am? And they jist go and cut lumps of mate when they will, laving the rest of the good carcase pisoning the air with putrefaction, becos they're too onmannerly to ate it or bury it! And oh, sirs, they sleep face down, with their goods under them, or the other blagguards steal them. And, ma'am, they've stolen organs, pianos, fiddles, harps, and what not, and they're jist thumping away widout a taste of a tune till you hear them miles away. Call that a camp indeed! Ah, cock them up, then, it's just a hurly-burly."

For Kinsella was an old soldier, and I believe in his heart was as much disgusted with the extraordinary disorder of the rebels' camps, as with the cruelties they practised.

So far our immediate neighbourhood and the district round remained peaceful; and our neighbours ventured over now and then. Bagenal Harvey, Mr. Colclough, and all those named by my father after uncle's dinner-party had joined the insurgents, so too had Sam O'Connor and his brother.

The O'Connors went to all extremes, but both Harvey and Colclough were kind men and merciful, and stopped bloodshed or cruelty where they could.

Larry was well and had won great commendation for his courage in the attack on Ballymanane Hill, where one hundred and twenty men dispersed a body of fully two thousand; and then returned safely to Gorey with a valuable capture of horses of which they were in great want.

It was a terrible fight, though, and the fox-hunters were once on the point of giving way, overpowered by numbers, but as they wavered Lord Mohurry with Larry at his side dashed in front, shouting, "Will you desert your colonel?" and as they still faltered he exclaimed, "and your countryman too?"

This touched the chord of national honour; with a ringing cheer they charged with the brave old man and carried all before them.

Twice Larry saved his colonel's life that day, once by striking down a man who was aiming at him, and once by giving him his own horse when Lord Mohurry's was shot under him; and his third feat of valour was to dash into the thickest of the fight, snatch up a poor little drummer-boy belonging to the militia, and bear him off safely in front of him. The poor little lad was Norah Clary's brother, and it was she who came to tell us of his rescue.

Poor girl! she herself seemed sadder than ever, for her bachelor, Tom Corish, had deserted and joined the rebels.

CHAPTER X.

"That our hearts be more united,
And our hands be clasped together,
Give me as my wife this maiden."

It is strange how soon human nature grows accustomed to things; now the country was in open insurrection, it seemed as if we were far more resigned than when we only dreaded it.

Even the horrors old Kinsella brought news of shocked us less by repetition.

Father was only greatly moved when he heard of cruel reprisals by the loyalists; then he used to pace the room like a caged lion, exclaiming, "'Tis not the way to bring peace. The God of hosts cannot bless such deeds of blood, but when men's passions are roused 'tis bitter work."

Lizzie Walker braved the perils of the road often to come and see us. Poor girl! she said we were her only comfort. She was betrothed to Major Tracy, and he was at Wexford; and her father and brothers were fighting on the other side, so her heart was torn between them, and she seemed not to know what to wish or hope for. Only she clung to mother like a child and seemed soothed by her gentle caressing. Mother

would have had her stay at Ballydorough, but she was the only capable one at home and would not leave it, and it fretted Eveleen sorely too, for she loved her uncle, and maintained he had joined the other side from weakness of judgment.

Katie went off to the garden one warm evening, taking Mollie to gather gooseberries, and they had brought back a large basketful for Eveleen and me to "top and tail" for tarts—which was too tedious a business to please either of them. So we were busy in the stillroom, though Eveleen was listening also for Walter, and thinking more of him than her fruit.

"Ah, I hear him!" she cried, her face lighting up, as a step sounded in the long stone passage. "Hark! some one is with him; it must be Larry."

She flew to the door, but I stood still, a wild hope filling my heart. That step!—could I be dreaming?—I was not.

In an instant a tall man in a large cloak was beside me, and I was in Arthur's arms again. I do not know how long we stayed together and alone, but presently Walter came to us and said:

"Father is in the hall, Arthur," and he kissed me fondly, adding, "God bless you, little sister."

Arthur walked up to father and mother, who stood together by the hearth, full now of

green bough instead of blazing logs, and after greeting them he said:

"Sir, you promised in time of peril to give Bride into my protection. I come to claim the fulfilment of that promise now; I think the time has come."

He spoke almost defiantly, as if he expected a refusal; but father answered firmly:

"The time has come, Arthur Gordon, and I will keep my word. What are your plans?"

Briefly but clearly Arthur said he had with great difficulty obtained leave of absence for a few days, and come over in a sailing vessel, which now lay off a certain point of the coast; having been for two or three passages already with fugitives. She would sail the next break of day but one, and we must be wed the first thing on the morrow, and make our way across country to her. He had ascertained that a mail coach would pass within ten miles of Ballydorough, which would leave us sufficiently near the coast—indeed, within half a mile.

The mail coaches now only ran at most irregular intervals, for fear of detention; this one was probably going purposely to convey people to the brig.

I heard all this as in a dream; it seemed incredible that I should be married on the morn. I could not speak as I heard it all discussed, though I saw how mother's lips

quivered, and Eveleen put a loving arm round me, whispering, "Courage, Bride darling, you will not fail him!"

And Mollie, the creature feeling something was strange, tried to give me two ripe strawberries she had found and thought all the world of.

Arthur had bought a special licence for our marriage, and at length all was settled. Old Kinsella had been consulted and decided the plan was excellent. The coaches having been hitherto altogether unmolested, and the route we were to traverse lying, we believed, through a very quiet part.

And then when mother kissed me the ice gave way, and I clung to her, and cried with all my heart; Arthur looked half vexed, but Evie said:

"Ah, don't grudge Bride to mother to-night, Arthur, it would not be in nature for her to part from us all with dry eyes, so loving as she is too, and sure a good daughter makes the best wife."

Then Arthur smiled at Eveleen and said she was right, and he should have her all to himself so soon as he could afford to be generous. And Walter told us he had heard the rebels had gained a great victory at Tubbernecring, which was sad news, and made me feel I could not leave all my dear ones in peril; and Arthur wanted to take the ladies, but father said so large a party would pass with

difficulty: and their duty not being so clearly marked out as mine was, they would do better to stay: and he made us all go early to bed, for indeed we must rise betimes. And by daybreak Eveleen was in my room helping me to dress, and cheering me with her tender words, and telling me once I was Arthur's wife I should have no fears; but indeed, even then I had not, for I loved him with all my heart, and the timorous nature that had made the boys call me hare-hearted seemed swallowed up in the strength of that love.

And mother came to me too, and kissed me again and again, and she packed me a little bag of clothes, for I must carry as few things as might be, and mother bade me wear a thickish dress lest I should be cold on the sea, and in it she sewed a few gold pieces: and I do think they were all she had, for money was very scarce with us now, and we lived on what we could raise on the place—pork, rabbits, poultry, and so on. And just as it was all done, father came to call us, and he took me down and there was Arthur waiting, and he held my hands and looked in my face, and seeing I was dry-eyed—for I had no tears left from over-night—he was delighted, and kissed me over and over, calling me "his own brave darling."

They made us eat and drink, and then I learnt it was settled, only father and Kinsella

were to go to the church with us, and Walter and Mr. Harcourt, the clergyman, would await us there.

For no one knew who to trust or what to fear in these times. So of all the household besides Kinsella, only old Keeran and Bridget, our good faithful cross old cook, knew what was on foot. Even little Mollie, the darling, only thought we were going for an early drive with father.

CHAPTER XI.

"In life's delight, in death's dismay,
In storm and sunshine, night and day,
In health, in sickness, in decay,
Here and hereafter, I am thine!"

For fear of tears, father left me no time for parting words, even with mother; and 'twas best so, for had I had time to think, I could not have left the dear old home so calmly; though even as it was, I had much to do to choke down the sobs, as I looked at every tree and bush that were such familiar friends to me.

The old crab tree, still rosy with bloom, where I had torn my best frock, the little brook where we had waded for trout when we were all children, the wild strawberry bank, one landmark after another we passed, and it seemed like saying good-bye to my happy untroubled girlhood as they passed from my sight.

What would the new life bring in the untried future? It could hardly be so free from trial; but I looked up at Arthur's handsome face, and knew I could bear all, do all with him.

We reached the little old church before

people were astir, and kind old Mr. Harcourt was ready with his book, and soon it was all over, the words had been spoken that made me Arthur's wife.

"Till death us do part, darling!" he whispered, as he kissed me, and strange bridal as it was, I thought I liked it better than Walter's with all the merry-making.

Mr. Harcourt was a very old man, and the troubled times were almost too much for him, so he only said a few words of kindly tremulous good wishes, and Walter said he would come back and help him home by-and-by when we were gone.

Outside the church gate stood the parish priest, Father Rourke, also an old man, but hale and strong. In these sad days many priests headed the rebels, inciting them to terrible acts of cruelty, but Father Rourke was very different, and we were friends with him, because, though our creeds differed, father was good and just alike to all, and never favoured or slighted any man on account of his religion, which was not the usual spirit of the time.

So Father Rourke we knew could be trusted, and indeed he would have been the first to warn us of danger.

As I left the church, with my hand through Arthur's arm, I saw him start, and then he came towards us.

"Miss Bride dear, may I give you good wishes? Though sure I'm thinking it's bad

manners of me to be saying Miss Bride ; it's Mrs. Gordon I'm speaking to maybe ? "

"Yes, father," I faltered blushing.

He glanced at Arthur, and seeing he looked ill-pleased, the father said gravely :

"Sir, an old man's blessing will do neither you nor your wife an ill," and as Arthur uncovered his head courteously, Father Rourke raising his hand blessed us reverently, and added to me specially :

"For all your kindness to my poor and sick, my dear, may God and the Blessed Virgin reward you and help you in your hour of need."

Then in different tones he said :

"Mr. Gordon, I don't mean to see where you go to out of this, but, sir, leave the country as fast as you may with her. Mr. Kavanagh, why aren't you going too ? "

"If I quit father, who'll protect my poor tenants ? " said father gravely. "Come, Arthur, you must lose no time."

We went to the car, which was some way off under the trees, and father drove us about eight miles, to the cross-roads where the coach would pass.

Few words passed, we just talked a little from the lips out about the time of the coach passing, for our hearts were all too full to dare speak of what was in them.

At the cross-roads we two got down and father clasped me once tight and drove away

back, for Arthur and I might hope to pass unnoticed, but he was known so far and wide.

"There is the coach," said Arthur, "away on the far hill, Bride love; kiss me before it comes, and tell me you are content. God knows, love, I will do my best for you."

"And I for you, darling," I said, as he bent his tall head and kissed me again and again.

The coach was very full, but room was made outside, and we drove off as fast as four horses could go.

Those with us were like ourselves, pretty evidently fleeing either from Ireland or to one of the great towns; but every one looked suspiciously at the other, and few words were exchanged among us.

At first the road lay through the smiling green country, and we saw no signs of civil war or trouble; but soon we saw the blackened ruins of cottages and farms that had been burnt; and by the roadside were unburied corpses, and here and there a dead horse which sent forth a sickening smell.

Presently in the distance I saw a pretty thatched house, where friends of ours lived, whom I had once or twice visited, and I whispered to Arthur that at least seemed uninjured; but as we drew nearer I saw the shrubs were all torn down and trampled, and Arthur said suddenly, "Turn away! Turn away, child!" and I obeyed him, but not so quickly that I could help catching a glimpse

of two dead bodies, half stripped and covered with blood on the green lawn, before the pretty cottage, and I felt they must be Mr. White and his son, and shuddered to think of their lying there with no man to give them Christian burial; but I said nothing still, though these sad signs of trouble grew more frequent. The road was almost deserted, and as mile after mile was passed, Arthur's face brightened and lost some of its careworn, anxious look. Once we heard firing and could see bodies of men moving far away, but could not distinguish what they were. Only my heart sank lest our Larry might be in danger.

At last we got to a little shebeen, where some passwords were interchanged, and fresh horses brought out. Arthur got down to stretch himself, for his long limbs were somewhat cramped; but I sat still and wondered at myself that I, who had always dreaded all sight of wounds, and could not even bear to see a rabbit shot, should feel so little moved or frightened by all that we had come through; but somehow I felt still in a dream, as if I, Bride Gordon, could not really be seeing all this, and that I should wake presently.

CHAPTER XII.

"And love can strive against a host
Can watch and wait and suffer long,
Still daring more when fearing most,
In very weakness strong."

The fresh horses cleared the ground merrily, other faces brightened besides Arthur's, and I began to fancy we should have several of our present companions as fellow-passengers by whispers I overheard:

Suddenly it struck me I did not even know where we were going in England, for there had been so little time for discussion, and if father and mother were content that was enough; but it seemed so odd that I could but smile to think I was going on contentedly enough I knew not whither. I was trying to picture what it would all be like, and thinking I cared little if I could but make Arthur happy, and thus thinking I slipt my hand in his and pressed it; he returned the pressure lovingly and held my hand close; but suddenly I felt him start violently, and his hand releasing mine went by instinct to his side, to feel for a sword, and at the same instant the coach stopped with a tremendous jerk which nearly unseated us all.

We were between high, rough, stone walls; and on turning a corner, had come right on to a great body of men, with pikes and green scarves; who, seizing the horses' heads forced the leaders back on their haunches, and nearly overset the coach. A wild-looking set they were, powder-stained, and some with bandaged heads or limbs, and their clothes bedabbled in blood. They demanded money and arms, and in face of so overwhelming a force no resistance could be made, and the passengers all paid readily enough.

There was a parley among them, they seemed drawing aside to let us proceed, and my heart rose again, but suddenly I recognized Peter Murphy, who had been in our service under Keeran and had left when the troubles began. I saw him point out Arthur, and say something to one who seemed a sort of leader.

Half a dozen men were at each horse's head again in an instant, and the leader stepped forward, and demanded of Arthur if he were a king's officer or no.

"I am," he answered promptly.

"Where are you going?"

"Out of your country with my wife, to join my regiment."

"Are you a Protestant or Catholic?"

"A Protestant," replied Arthur.

There was a short parley among the rebels; and then the same man stepping out again,

said they wanted officers to head an attack on a near town on the morrow, and they would give him a command, if he would take their oath of fealty, or if he refused he must die at once.

Without hesitation Arthur stood up and said, in ringing tones:

"I have already sworn allegiance to my king. Nor can I offend my God by a breach of that oath, nor join the king's enemies; but, my men, I cannot believe you would foully murder one who is leaving your country, perhaps never to return, and who has a young wife dependent on his protection."

Folding his arms, he awaited their answer, while there was a suppressed murmur of approbation among those on the coach at his brave words.

I felt carried away by them out of all personal fear, and would have stood by him, but with a strong hand he kept me in my seat.

"Seize him!" the rebel chief shouted.

"Run, Arthur! Save yourself for me," I cried.

"It is your only hope, sir, and ours!" cried the passengers.

The coach was on a level with the wall; he sprang on the top and down on the other side into the field, and ran like a deer across the grass, in the direction of a rather large farm which he could see at a distance. A

grey stone building, with outbuildings and yards, prettily situated, and sheltered at the back by a thick belt of green, the outskirt of a large wood of fir and other trees, on the brow of the field.

"Fire!" cried the rebel chief, and the muskets rang out; but Arthur pursued his course, and those who had given chase were far behind. He might yet gain help at the farm, or shelter in the thick wood beyond it.

I could hardly draw breath, and all on the coach were mute, till a sudden exclamation from the driver broke the silence.

From the farm another band of men rushed down; they met Arthur. I saw him use the pistols he had not given up, and one man fell; then Arthur snatched his pike from him, and with his back against a tree, defended himself with all the energy of desperation against overwhelming odds; but overpowered by numbers he sank down at last.

Then only the passengers, who had watched with breathless excitement, urged the driver to fly while the rebels' attention was engaged. And I, awaking from my stupor, descended from the coach and climbed on the rough stone wall. Even in their peril half a dozen kindly hearts urged me to trust myself to them and return to the coach.

"Sure, the man that owned you's dead, child; more's the pity, we will take care of you," cried several.

"Drive on," I replied. "I'll die with him."

I dropped in the field; and looking back reluctantly the coachman drove off, seeing it useless to risk the others needlessly for me.

I took my way over the grass straight to where Arthur lay, a group of men still round his body, their pikes wet with his blood. One, more cruel than the rest, would have given him another wound; but I dashed the pike aside and confronted them all, wrought up to a pitch of excitement which knew no dread of death.

"You have done your cowardly work," I cried. "It took a dozen to murder one man; now kill me too, or leave me alone with my dead husband."

I expected they would shoot or pike me; but in my excitement it seemed a small thing if they did. And kneeling down I pressed my lips to Arthur's for the last kiss, and when I looked up again the men were moving away.

I was to be left uninjured.

In ten minutes not a man was there; they had carried off their wounded, and I was alone.

I unfastened Arthur's waistcoat, and put my hand to his heart. There was a slight pulsation, and it grew stronger under my hand. Tearing up hastily strips from my clothes, I bound up the gaping wounds left by the cruel pikes on his body and limbs, and so staunched the flow of blood.

He was still alive, though I could not but

fear he was wounded unto death. And what could I do? He lay under a tree as he had fallen, all among the daisies, and mayweed, and lady-fern; and a little bird flew to the tree and sang cheerily and bravely, God's fair world all so peaceful under the calm evening sunshine, except where defaced by man's crimes and passions.

I raised Arthur's head, and put him into as easy a position as I could, for he was breathing regularly now, though the breath came weakly and with labour. Not far off, where the fern grew freshest, was a little spring, and getting water in a large leaf, I bathed his face and wetted his lips; and presently his large dark eyes opened for a moment and he smiled.

I gave him more water, and he revived a little and whispered:

"Why did you stay? I hoped you were safe in the ship."

Then his head sank back again, and as he lay so still I feared he was dead or dying.

In desperate hope of help I ran towards the farm, but it was wrecked, and two or three bodies lay about, from which the blood had not ceased flowing, and one was a pretty girl with long bright hair, and across her lay a great dog as if he had died in defending her: a few goats were bleating, and some fowls ran about, but no other sign of life was there.

I sought for horse or donkey, thinking that to go on the road again could be no worse

than our present plight, and there were carts but no beasts to draw them.

So I went back to Arthur and took his head on my knee, and sat there while the shades of evening gathered, and the bats flitted about, and the grasshoppers chirped. I could do nothing: for miles back there had been no houses but smoking ruins, and no one afoot, and where could I seek help? I could but pray to God not to forget us; and the dew fell, and there was a great stillness.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Honour to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs."

Suddenly over the dewy grass I saw two figures stealing along; as they drew nearer I could tell they wore green scarves, and I thought they had come back to finish their work, and I felt no fear but a sudden joy, for after all I might be waiting in heaven for Arthur.

Then I heard my name called gently, and I saw they were Tom Corish and Peter Murphy. The latter burst out crying when he saw me; he was always a poor soft boy, and whispered:

"Miss Bride, sure I niver niver thought I'd bring such destruction on ye! Oh, oh, oh, my misery! Sure I'm clane out o' my sinses with it, and I've brought Tom to help ye."

Tom, who looked terribly haggard and wild, said sharply:

"Pether, you ommadaun, stay that. Oh, God be praised, ma'am, your gentleman's alive, then? 'tis more than I hoped: sure I'd come to bury him; Peter and the rest swore he was dead."

"What can we do now at all, at all, I wonder?"

Tom looked round and ran off to the farm, then returned with an old door, which he laid down by Arthur.

"Now, ma'am dear, help us when I say one."

And by our united efforts Arthur's still senseless body was put on the door, then the two lifted it from the ground, and Tom leading, they went to the back of the farm, avoiding, the scene of slaughter, which they knew not I had seen.

There was a large shed there little injured, and half full of hay. Of this with my help a fair bed was easily made and Arthur laid on it.

Tom disappeared, and returned with a tin pannikin of milk, having milked the goats, and gave me also some whiskey, and bread and meat, which they had brought with them; Peter only whispered, "Miss Bride dear, 'tis all I can do for you, God help ye and him, but maybe I could find Norah and send," said Tom.

"Norah!" I cried. "Why, Tom, she must be miles from here."

"Not so far as ye think, ma'am," said Tom sadly, "but you must give me a token for her, for she won't speak to me now."

I gave him a handkerchief that Norah had herself worked for me, and he said beseechingly:

"Sure you were ever good as an angel to us all, ma'am. Could ye spake a word for me to her? Tell her I'm not so bad as some."

"Indeed, indeed I will, Tom," I cried. "If ever I am happy again 'tis to you I'll owe it, for your help to-night."

"Bless you for thim same words," said Tom. "But oh, miss, you know Norah's brother, the drummer: him she took from his dying mother and reared from the birth."

"The one Master Larry saved, little Pat?"

"The same, ma'am. Sure we've got him now, worse luck, and the poor little lad just dashed his foot through his drum, the cratur'; and said it should never beat for rebels. So they piked him."

"That child!" I exclaimed, shuddering. "Is he dead?"

"No, ma'am, he's betther; but Norah will go mad if he dies."

"Tom, Tom," I exclaimed eagerly, "you're too good for this cruel work. Leave it, for God's sake."

Tom gave a bitter laugh.

"Where will I go? back to the militia I deserted, or to Norah who won't own me? What can I do at all at all? Betther get up and come."

Peter would not go till I forgave him; the poor soft lad was more weak than bad, like many more who hardly knew what they were doing.

The shed was warm and comfortable after the chilly night air, and I felt hope revive; surely yet Arthur might live.

I was kneeling by Arthur trying to give him some milk, when Tom reappeared with some blankets from the farm. He added some whiskey to the milk, and helped me, and though Arthur seemed unable to swallow at first, by degrees he drank more easily.

"'Tis fainting from loss of blood he is," said Tom. "Keep on giving him a little as often as you can, ma'am dear. Sure I think he'll mend, as they did not let the life clane out of him at first, for he's a grand strong-made man, and will take a powerful lot of killing. See, ma'am, I've got his pistols here, are they good for you to use?"

"Oh, no, no," I said, "Miss Kathie could, but I cannot, Tom."

"Well, then, ma'am, dear, may I take them? for that'll be a cloak for me if I'm questioned, to say I came back for them."

"Oh, take them, Tom," I said, "and this, too," giving him a handsome pin from Arthur's cravat.

He looked doubtful.

"Maybe I'd best have it to show. Well, I must go, ma'am. See, you can put up the bar when I'm gone; and I think, seeing the farm's desthroyed, no one will come."

The moon shone in presently, and I was thankful; for it was difficult to tend Arthur

in darkness, but from time to time as I gave him the milk, I trusted he took it more readily, though it was so little he could get down. Towards morning he began to grow restless and feverish, and mutter broken sentences; but this ended in time and I hoped he slept.

Then I began to fancy in the quiet I heard steps and voices, and a foolish fear possessed me that the dead bodies which lay so near me were moving, and I trembled as if I had not far more to fear from the living, than from those whom God had called to their rest. Conquering my folly with an effort, I got on the hay to a hole in the wall and peeped out; sure enough there were men moving stealthily, carrying spades, and I saw them digging. Then it flashed on me they were come to bury the dead, and presently they went round the house and fetched the corpses and laid them in the ground: and one man, who I think was young, sobbed over the poor girl as if his heart would break, and I saw him cut off a lock of her long hair and kiss her again and again, and I wondered if he were brother or lover.

Their sad work was done just as the day broke, and they stole away, and I felt glad the poor things were laid away decently.

No one came near again; I ventured out and milked the goats, who were glad enough to come and docile; and I found two or three eggs; and growing bolder went in the farm

there was little left of any worth but a few loaves, so I took them and knew I should have food at any rate.

Arthur was able to speak a little and seemed to remember pretty clearly what had happened up to the time he fell in the field, so I told him the rest, thinking it better he should know than wonder about it.

"Ah," he said, when I had done, "the old priest's blessing came back sooner than he thought; God has helped in the hour of our need."

"Ah, if He spares you to me, I care for nothing—nothing," I cried. "You will not leave me, Arthur. You are better, are you not?"

"God's will be done," he said faintly. "I fear I am badly hurt, and my wounds grow more painful with every hour."

I went out again and got fresh cold water and made the bandages wet, and he was relieved and slept again, and all day I kept getting fresh water, and though I dreaded it might be wrong, it seemed to soothe him; and little as I knew it, perhaps the fresh air of the shed and cold water were the best chance for his wounds, for by night they looked less inflamed and were less painful, but he was terribly weak and low. I watched by him another night, but in the dawn I heard my name called, and I knew Norah's voice, and

Poor girl! she kissed my hands and cried over me, and then she bade me sleep and she would watch over Arthur; but I would not rest till she had heard how Tom Corish had braved all to help us, and I knew she was pleased though she would not say so, but covering me over with her cloak, sat silent; and, thoroughly wearied out, I slept soundly in the hay.

When I awoke Norah told me Arthur had recognized her, and she had given him milk and thought he was sleeping; so we talked in low voices and she told me she hoped to take me back to Ballydorough, for she knew not what better to do, as even if we got to the coast, she knew not when the brig would return, as it came not always to the same place, and might be going somewhere miles away. She said that in a day or two she would get a horse perhaps, and we could use a farm cart, and by getting the password from Tom get through the country safely, saying that we were taking home a wounded man.

I did not think Arthur would consent to pass as a rebel, but weak as he was he would not know, and it would lie light on my conscience if I saved him; but Norah could not go till she heard where little Pat was, and though she said little I felt sure she was trying to scheme some plan to save him too.

she went, although she generally brought back intelligence of what was doing.

But my world was bounded by the walls of the shed, and my very soul was wrapped up in my husband, so if he seemed stronger my spirits rose accordingly. Norah was an invaluable aid, she was handy and clever and could sometimes bring him a little better food, but the fever ran high, and he could take little.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Then woman's shriek was heard in vain,
Nor infancy's unpitied plain,
More than the warrior's groan could gain
Respite from ruthless butchery."

The little shed seemed such a safe, forgotten place, I dreaded the effort of leaving it; but Norah returned from one of her wanderings and said:

"I have the horse, mavourneen; to-night we must try our fortunes, and may the Virgin and all the saints be at our backs."

I thought Arthur was sleeping, but he asked what Norah said, and when he knew said quietly:

"As you will, Norah, I am ready."

I could not think how we two girls could get him in the cart, for he was heavy from being so tall; but Norah built a bank of hay, and we drew him little by little up that and left him to rest on the top, and when the horse was harnessed Norah backed it in the shed and filled the cart with hay, and it was easy to move him, as he could help himself a little, and the cart was just level with the hay heap on which he lay.

Silently we walked by the cart away

through field roads, where the flowers smelt sweet in the fresh warm night.

I could see Norah was in a state of terrible anxiety and suppressed excitement; but she was very silent, only urging on the horse eagerly.

It was a trying journey for Arthur, and he suffered much, for his wounds were all unhealed, and the jolting of the cart was agony to him; but he said never a word, only now and then he could not quite suppress a moan of pain when we passed a worse piece of road, for in the darkness we could not choose our way. Norah pressed on steadily, leading the horse on the grass to ease Arthur as much as she could, and when the moon shone I could see her face white and hard as marble, with a wild glare in her great blue eyes.

Once I prayed her to tell me her grief, but she said in hoarse tones:

"Don't speak to me for the love of God."

On and on we went; I was riding in the cart as thus I could a little save Arthur from the jolting; he was unconscious now, and murmuring delirious words, but very gently.

Suddenly in a wood Norah stopped and said:

"Mrs. Gordon ma'am, darling, I must leave you; if I'm not back in an hour, drive on, for I'll be dead."

"What do you mean, Norah?" I cried, for I feared she was mad.

She turned to me with a heart-breaking smile on her white face and said:

"Miss Bride—sure I can't call you yer right name—I must make one trial to save my little Pat; sure my mother as she died bade me keep him as the core of my heart, and I'll save him or die in the trying."

"Where is he, Norah?"

"Not far away, in the barn at Scullabogue, dear; but I'm forgetting all, the password is Napper Tandy; say you're going to Father Rourke, and the road is straight, once you're out of this, till you get to the cross-road, then turn to the right."

Kissing my hands she was gone, and I sat there dismayed. In all my fears I had never thought that Norah would leave me thus. Arthur began to beg for water, and I searched till I could find some; he was burning with fever, and I could do little for him. The dawn had come, and as he lay quieter at last I pushed my way through the bushes and looked up at the lovely rosy and golden clouds, and listened to the birds and waited.

I found I was near the edge of the wood and went on to the outskirt, and looked over the country, hoping to see Norah, for it was light now, and the sun had risen.

Some way off I could see farm buildings, and even figures moving, and as I watched, suddenly flames burst out, and there rang out

a despairing, agonized cry as of many human beings in their death-throe.

So terrible was the sound that I rushed back to the cart and threw myself down by it, stopping my ears, and praying for the poor souls passing from earth in such pain, and still the wail of anguish rang, and I could not keep it out.

Through the wood crashed a great horse bearing a double burden, and Norah sprang off it, lifting down her little brother Pat, still in his red drummer's coat.

"Oh, Norah, Norah, what is it? What are those cries?" I exclaimed.

Pale as ashes Norah was stripping off Pat's uniform coat, and said in reply:

"Miss Bride, come away. Ah, I'll never forget it till my dying day! O God, help the poor dying craturs, the rebels have fired the barn."

Putting Pat in the cart by Arthur she hastened to unfasten the cart horse, and never spoke again till we were on our journey, and the awful sound died away in the distance; then in whispers she told me how hundreds were in the barn wounded, bound prisoners, men, women, and children of all ages.

Three times word had come to Tom Corish, who was sentinel, to fire the barn, but he would not. When Norah arrived he let her have little Pat out to say "Good-bye," and whispered his horse stood by, and he would

not stop her if she could escape with the child.

Taking him at his word, she snatched up the boy and galloped off, but looking back saw some man dash his pike into a great mass of blazing wood, and fire the barn in several places.

The fire flared up fiercely, she could see the poor agonized victims beaten back into the flames, and one poor mother threw out her child, only to have it caught up and returned into the hottest of the conflagration. Sick with horror I listened, and then we heard a horse coming up at full speed, and Tom Corish flung himself off by us.

We shrank from him, but snatching our dresses he fell on his knees, swearing before God and all the saints he was guiltless of the horrible butchery, and had fled from it, as had others.

"Sure the Bannow men are all up and off, every mother's son of them; and if ye won't belave me, Norah," cried Tom, "I'll just go back, and do the divil's work with the worst of them."

Norah stood like a statue and said not a word.

"Norah, Norah!" I cried, "do speak to Tom. You'll regret it to your dying day if you let him go back."

Little Pat sat upon the cart and cried:

"Norah, darlint, hark to Miss Bride."

Suddenly Norah's composed, hard look gave way, and in an instant she was sobbing in Tom's arms, and all misunderstanding was over. But there was no time to waste in explanations, we were in too great danger. However, Tom thought probably that his escape was unnoticed in the fiendish excitement of the moment; and so it proved. He changed our old pony for his stronger horse, and we went on again till we came to another lonely wood, and there halted for a short rest, and to consider what to do.

Tom Corish was in danger of being shot by either side now as a deserter from both, and he seemed to have little hope of a happier fate; but with reconciliation Norah was ready to brave all, and try all for her lover.

She was a very tall girl, and he was only about the same height, so she made him put on her long cloak, and draw the hood closely over his head, and, disappearing among the trees, came back with one of her skirts she had taken off, and when it was on him, and his trousers tucked up, he might pass fairly well for a woman.

There was a little jesting between the two, as Tom was disguised, but I was too anxious about Arthur to heed them much; the long, rough journey and the suffering had been too much for him, and he lay quite unconscious, only showing that life still lingered by an occasional faint moaning sound.

Pat, the little drummer, was fairly recovered, and though unable to walk from a bad wound in the thigh, was bravely doing his best to support Arthur, and keep him from being jolted by the cart, though he seemed past feeling it, and we had not even whiskey left now to give him.

CHAPTER XV.

"Oh Esperance, hope on! the fight
Is never lost, while fight ye may;
At home the hearth is shining bright,
Though yet unseen along the way;
And the darkest hour of all the night
Is that which brings the day."

We were out on the main road at last, and far away on the brow of a hill there appeared a cloud of dust.

"Troops on the march," ejaculated Tom; "what'll they be now, I wonder?"

"What will we do?" I cried.

"Sure, ma'am, we'd best face it out. You and Norah must spake; if they're king's men you'll be all right; if not we've the word, and I can at a pinch swear I'm disguised to carry instructions."

With a beating heart I watched the fast-approaching mass, feeling by no means the confidence Tom seemed to, and which I thought might be partly assumed for our sakes.

What was my relief to recognize in the officer in command our dear old friend Lord Mohurry at the head of his foxhunters, and a long line of infantry whom I did not know; and some baggage waggons following after.

"What have we here?" said Lord Mohurry,

halting as I ran up to him with outstretched hands. "Heavens and earth! can I believe my eyes, Bride? Child, what are you doing here? and who are these?"

Standing up in his stirrups Lord Mohurry shouted for Larry, who dashed up and saluted, saying:

"What is it, sir?" and his eyes following Lord Mohurry's glance, he also exclaimed, "Bride darling! what has happened? how came you here?"

I explained in a few words, and it seemed Arthur's defiant resolve to die rather than be unfaithful had become known through some on the coach with us, and shaking me warmly by the hand, Lord Mohurry congratulated me on being the wife of so good an officer. He asked casually about Norah and the disguised Tom.

I told him they were people who had saved me in my peril.

By this time other officers had ridden up to learn what was going on, and a surgeon was busy with Arthur.

Little Pat recognizing some of his own officers, was saluting vigorously, but no one noticed him till Larry exclaimed:

"Pat, you imp, is it yourself? Sure, you've as many lives as a cat. Look here, sir, here's the lost drummer."

"Ah, my boy, where's your drum?" asked a good-natured-looking old officer.

"Plase, sir, I put my foot through it when the spalpeens caught me; for says I, 'His Majesty's drum shan't play for rebels.'"

"And then they piked him," I added to Larry.

"Bravo, my lad!" cried the old officer, and in stentorian tones he shouted back to his regiment, "My lads, we have two heroes here, who have both risked death rather than be traitors; give them a cheer." Such a shout rang out from the soldiers, that it must have been heard for miles; again and again it was repeated, and then some one caught up Pat, and he was handed down the ranks like a baby.

The surgeon had given Arthur some very strong restorative, and he lifted himself a little, and recognized Larry, who was bending over him anxiously.

"Larry boy," he said, "is it really you? Thank God, Bride is in safe hands at last."

He could say no more, and the surgeon was speaking hurriedly to Lord Mohurry and the other officers. I begged him to tell me the worst.

"The danger is in his state of extreme exhaustion, Mrs. Gordon," said the doctor kindly. "If we could get him to a house, he might do very well."

"We are not more than five miles from Ballydorough, Bride," said Larry. "Cheer up, we'll get him there somehow."

"Could he bear quicker transit?" asked Lord Mohurry.

"If we had a better vehicle," said the doctor. "That cart to a man cut to pieces as he seems to be, must be like the rack. How many hours has he been in it, madam?"

"I hardly know, but fourteen or fifteen certainly."

"Good heavens! there is no time to lose," cried Lord Mohurry. "Larry boy, what's to be done? You know the country best?"

"Ride across country to Cromadee, borrow a car, bring it round by yon borreen, and they could be home in an hour from now."

Half a dozen foxhunters volunteered to ride at once, and away they dashed over hedges and ditches at break-neck pace. Lord Mohurry and the other senior officers held a consultation in low voices, the doctor stood by Arthur watching him attentively.

And Larry talked to me. I could tell him little of the rebels' movements; but the hideous tragedy at Scullabogue was too fresh in my mind not to be related, and burning with indignation he went to the senior officers. Nor could I, in whose ears those death-cries still rang, wonder at the fury my recital excited. Men's eyes flashed; they grasped their swords, and I was cross-questioned, though it was but little I could tell.

Norah and Tom had drawn away from the cart and were sitting down. Larry, who

had glanced at them curiously several times, said:

"Bride, who *is* that little Norah Clary? Sure there's some mystery about the colleen."

"Larry," I whispered, "don't betray him. It's Tom Corish."

"Tom Corish the blackguard deserter!"

"Whisht! whisht!" I cried, putting my hand to his mouth. "But for him I would be dead probably, and Arthur certainly."

I told him all Tom had done, and Larry's face was a picture of comical uncertainty.

"Oh, Bride, Bride!" he said; "what ought I to do at all, at all? Sure hanging's too good for him. I'll ask the chief."

He called Lord Mohurry aside, and explained how matters stood, adding:

"And now what will I do?"

"Do, ye born natural? Sure if your legs are long your wits are short!" cried the old man. "Do nothing at all, of course. Is it the place of a discreet young gentleman to be peeping under all the women's hoods if it pleases them to keep them close? Why need you know if there's trousers or petticoats hidden beneath? And Larry boy, whisht now: if the colonel there got wind of him, sure 'twould not be ten minutes he'd have to live, if he'd saved Gordon's life twenty times over. Let the lad live and repent."

So Tom sat still and Norah was questioned sharply, and her sympathies not being now

on the other side, she answered clearly and simply enough to satisfy even the English colonel about the massacre at Scullabogue. Otherwise she knew little of which they were not already aware; except that she perhaps astonished them rather by her account of the numbers gathered together now under the green flag.

She was asked who Tom was and answered quietly:

"One in great trouble, sir; there's nought that I can't tell you as well as that cratur."

"Is she maid, wife, or widow?" said the colonel sharply.

"The cratur never was any man's wife, nor ever will be, sir," answered Norah demurely, much to Larry's delight.

I thought the colonel was inclined to ask further questions about Tom; but Lord Mohurry turned the subject and it was dropped.

CHAPTER XVI.

"And laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name. Complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood; for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the withered moon,
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops of sweat."

THE march of the troops could be no longer delayed; but Larry was told off with a small detachment to carry us safe to Ballydorough. The surgeon also remained with us, and I could see he was watching Arthur very anxiously now, and was eager for the arrival of the car.

Before the officers left, they all shook hands with me, wishing me all good fortune, and last of all came the English major, to whom Lizzie Walker was engaged, who had only bowed to me at first.

He bent down low from his saddle and said:

"Mrs. Gordon, in your trouble can you spare a thought for others?"

"Indeed I can," I said. "What can I do?"

He said sadly:

"If you see Lizzie, give her my dear love, and tell her to trust me, that I will be true

under all or any circumstances, even if the worst come. Bid her when her home is broken up, trust my honour, and come straight to me. By the faith of an Englishman, she shall never repent it. Will you believe me when I say so? I know it is much to ask."

I looked straight into his face, and if truth and honesty were ever written on a man's countenance, it was there, though he was not handsome.

"I do believe you," I said, "and I will do all I can with Lizzie."

"Thank you," he said earnestly, and rode off to join his men.

Little Pat was left with his sister, and Larry advised Norah to go on, but she would not, till she was sure that a car could be procured.

Presently we saw the messengers riding back, and they said the car was on its way, so Norah drove off the cart, Tom of course accompanying in silence, he having passed for a woman, half dazed with grief by loss of friends and possessions.

An inside car came at last, and the surgeon and I got in to support Arthur, who seemed not to feel being lifted, though he must have suffered had he been conscious, for it was no such easy matter, on account of his weight, to get him in the car.

Presently the doctor asked if it were pos-

sible to get a shorter way to Ballydorough, for a horseman, and when I said yes, he called to Larry, and said :

" Mr. Kavanagh, ride on and get a bed and all ready for your brother-in-law. It's a question of life or death now, and every moment is of value."

He did not mean me to hear the last words, for men always think it a kindness to hide the worst from women ; as if they could be blinded like children to what is passing before them.

His words gave me no shock, for the dreamy feeling was on me again, and I felt as if I took no personal part in the matter, only the road surely was never so long before, though our horse was a good one, and urged to go at speed.

We reached the well-known door at last, kind familiar faces were round me once more, but I hardly knew what they said, only I heard mother say to the doctor :

" Surely it is all over ? "

Father was not there, but Walter, kind and prompt as usual, helped to carry Arthur, and he and Larry stayed to assist the surgeon, though Larry was too much grieved to be much use. They would have sent me away, but I would not go. If they feared tears or faintings, they found their mistake. I was past all such weakness, and could give my help far more calmly than any one else,

though I knew my darling's life trembled in the balance, and their voices sounded far away.

Twice the surgeon relaxed his efforts, saying he feared it was in vain, for the wounds were enough to destroy two men; but in pity for me, he persevered, till at last there was a faint sigh, and Arthur began to return by slow degrees from death-like insensibility, to life.

"Thank God, my dear young lady," exclaimed Dr. Somers warmly, "we will bring him round now. I was beginning to despair. Raise him a little, Mr. Kavanagh, he'll breathe easier."

"Come, Mr. Gordon, that's better," as Arthur opened his eyes, and looked around anxiously. "Oh, here is your wife, sir, we have her quite safe. Speak to him, madam, and make him drink this if you can."

And as I succeeded, the doctor nodded approvingly saying:

"Now, Mrs. Gordon, I must just look to these wounds for him, and then we will let him sleep, poor fellow."

And when he had made a brief examination of the injuries, Doctor Somers whispered to me:

"You have been a jewel of a nurse, Mrs. Gordon, and there is nothing to fear now, but it is just a miracle that nearly in every instance they have but just escaped touching a vital part with their pikes; half an inch more here in the side, and the whole college of surgeons could not have saved him."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Smiling, frowning, evermore,
Thou art perfect in love lore,
Ever varying, Madeleine."

WALTER took the doctor away to have some refreshment, and I sat watching Arthur, feeling nothing but that the long strain was over, and I had others to help me.

Presently the doctor returned with mother, and they ordered me away to rest. I would have objected, but the doctor said authoritatively that I must be obedient, I could do little just now, and must spare myself when I could, and mother promised she or Walter would remain in my place with the doctor, who would not leave that night.

Kathleen and Evie were waiting outside, and carrying me off to my old room put me to bed, though I protested that I could not sleep.

Nor could I at first, for all the horrors came back to my mind, from the first stopping of the coach by the rebels, to the horrible massacre at the barn, and I could not cease talking of them; but Eveleen listened and in her tender fashion soothed me, and at last I slept and woke no more till late at night, when I

could not at first think where I was; but when I moved Walter came in with a light.

"Oh, I must go to Arthur," I cried.

"Bride dear," he said, "Arthur sends his love and begs you will stay here."

"He is awake? he must want me," I urged. "Is he in pain?"

"He has been, dear; but he is better, and Doctor Somers thinks the improvement in him wonderful."

Walter's steady gentleness generally worked its effect on me; but I suppose I was overdone, for I cried and called him unkind to wish to keep me from my husband.

"It is for your own sake," he said, perplexed by my waywardness.

Evie overheard him and came in smiling.

"It is *not* for Bride's sake exactly, Walter," she said. "But Arthur is set on her resting, and so weak as he is, if we oppose him, there is no chance of his sleeping, for it will make him feverish."

I saw their eyes meet, and Walter smiled.

"You little witch," he said.

"You great goose of a man," answered Evie merrily. "Much the child cares for herself. Can't you see it's all that great tall husband she's fretting over? Bride dear, I'm not deceiving you, though. Doctor Somers begged you would give in to Arthur's wishes."

So I gave in, and asked Walter's pardon for my petulance. He laughed, and sitting on the

bed held my tray, for Evie insisted on my eating a good supper, she was so like mother in her kind ways; and he and Evie joked, he saying she should not call her husband a goose.

"A gander, then," she retorted. "And indeed, I'm not sure a goose would have blundered so. As if for the first few weeks one could dream of anything but one's husband. I've been married a long, long time, you know, Walter, that is so different."

"Repenting at leisure, Evie?" said Walter smiling. "I'm sure Larry's fat friend downstairs is charming enough to make all you married ladies regret you are not free. Ah, here is Larry."

Larry came in, and also sat on my bed, remarking:

"That monkey Kathleen is worse than ever. There's old fat Power panting out compliments like an affectionate porpoise, and little Bill Neville I've just put to bed, for what with Kathie and the father's best whiskey, the child's making a fool of himself, and she just laughing in their faces."

"Where is Kathie?" I said; "I have hardly seen her."

"Just coming," said Larry, and as he spoke in danced Kathie, her eyes shining with mischievous glee.

"Oh, Larry!" she cried, "I have not had such fun for weeks; must you go to-morrow?"

"Must I go?" growled Larry. "As if it is me you want. Yes miss, I'm off at daybreak. Lord Mohurry left me to use my own judgment, and the old chief can give it a fellow if he's not pleased, I can tell you. If I did not know he was so soft on you all, I would just have gone to-night, but Somers declared it was these few hours he must have with Arthur."

"Well, I'll just try now to persuade him Arthur wants him a taste longer," said Kathleen.

"He's too old a bird to be caught with your chaff," remarked Walter.

Kathie looked demure for a moment, then her eyes met Larry's, and she laughed and said in an assumed voice:

"Ah, my brother's eyes are just the same colour as mine—like the sea in summer; how they will recall these two short moments."

"Has that young idiot been telling you that rubbish too?" said Larry, trying to be cross but breaking into a laugh. "Kathie, you imp, why could not you let that boy alone?"

"Mother told me always to be polite to visitors," said Kathleen, with the manner of a good child of six.

"I'm sure she did not tell you to make a bigger ass of that boy than Nature had already made; he will be the plague of my life now," said Larry.

"He says all he shall live for now is to look at you, Larry."

"On account of the likeness, Larry," laughed Evie. "What bad luck it is for you to flatter Kathleen so. Kathie, what was that fat old thing saying—do tell me?"

Kathleen sat down with an asthmatic wheeze in a chair, giving her slender figure somehow the action of a very stout person, and in a thick tone began:

"'Mrs. Kavanagh—Mrs. Walter I should say,'" then in her natural voice:

"'I am only Miss Kavanagh, sir.'

"'Oh, me dear young lady. Not married? sure you're engaged?'

"'Not at all, sir.'

"'Oh, then, a plague of blindness must be on the boys about here, then.'

"'Well, I don't know, perhaps it is—that—I don't quite like *boys;* what I admire now is some one a little older.'

"'Ah, I understand, my dear young creature; some one more mature in person and moind, a sturdy oak for a support to the delicate creeper.'"

"Rubbish, Kathie, you're making up," said Larry.

"As if I could not make something better," answered Kathie.

"Oh, hush, Larry, let her go on," laughed Eveleen, and Kathie continued:

"'Roight you are, Miss Kavanagh; boys are fickle creatures, but a steady personable man of thirty-two, say.'"

"Thirty-two? he's over fifty!" ejaculated Larry.

"'There, now, would be the one to support you through loife's pathways.'

"So I gave a little sigh, and he gave another, just like the noise the old pump makes when the sucker's loose, you know, Bride; and that's all—at least, all I'm going to tell you."

And up sprang Kathie, and on to the table where she went through all her "steps," and then jumping off, sat on Larry's lap and kissed him, saying:

"Oh, Larry, Larry, the house has been as dull as dull without you, boy."

Larry stroked her curly hair, for he and she were always companions, and indeed, no one could resist her coaxing.

"Don't you think Bride ought to be left in peace?" said Walter; "she wants rest, poor child."

"Oh, don't go yet," I said, for the old home ways and the familiar joking were effacing all I had gone through since I left them; and Walter guessed this, I fancy, for he did not press the point.

"What about Lizzie Walker?" I asked. "I have a message for her."

"Ah," said Larry gravely, "I pity the poor girl, the outlook is a bad one, I fancy."

"Anything worse?" asked Evie anxiously

"Have you not heard, Eveleen? Loo and Fan are flourishing about with the rebels,

and Mrs. Colclough too, covered with green ribbons. Fan does little, but Loo was riding at the head of a lot the other day, and they had a brush with some of the Fencibles, and she was taken."

"Oh, what has become of her?"

"Well, the officer reprimanded her and let her go; but I hear he got in hot water about it, so she'll not get off again so lightly."

"Where is Lizzie?" I said.

"At home, and all alone," said Evie; "she will stay for fear her father may want help. The children are in Dublin with friends; I fancied the girls were there, too."

"I'm afraid Tracy can hardly be expected to marry Lizzie under all circumstances," said Walter.

I repeated the message Major Tracy had given me for her, and Larry said:

"I don't know Tracy well, but men say he is to be depended on."

"You naughty children, I thought Bride was to have a good night," said mother at the door. "Boys and girls, do you know what o'clock it is?"

"I know I shall lose my beauty sleep, mother," said Larry with a stretch and a yawn. "'Tis too bad of these girls to keep me up."

"Poor fellow!" said mother. "I suppose you have not kept the girls up?"

"Mother, may I not go back to Arthur,"

I said; "really and really I am quite rested."

"Really and really," smiled mother, "you must trust him with us to-night, Bride, and the dear boy seems so much stronger since his last sleep, you need not be anxious."

"Will I kiss him for you, Bride?" asked Larry mischievously.

"If you offered the same to Mr. Power for Kathie, now," said Eveleen, "he might accept it."

"Heaven forbid," answered Larry fervently, making a grimace.

They all went away and I was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the brain, or in the head?
How begot? How nourished?
Reply. Reply."

LARRY'S voice was the first I heard next morning, shouting out some orders in the stable-yard. It was a lovely summer day, and so early that the dew-drops lay heavy on the June roses that clustered about my window.

Dressing hastily I left my room. Early as it was I could hear a bustle going on below; breakfast was preparing for the foxhunters, and Larry came clanking up the great staircase.

"Ah, good morning," he cried. "How's Arthur?"

"I am just going to him."

"Then I'll come too if I may," said Larry putting his arm round me.

Arthur was awake and the doctor with him; the latter said cheerily:

"Ah, Mrs. Gordon, you look as fresh as a rose after your rest, and as for this husband of yours, I am proud of him, he's quite another man this morning."

"Indeed I ought to be after the trouble I have given every one," Arthur said.

"Well, I must say, sir," remarked Mr. Somers in his quiet slow way, "you seem to me a lucky person. First your wife and that handsome girl Norah keep the life in you by little short of a miracle, considering the means at their command, and your condition; then, as it's getting beyond them, and you were slipping, as it were, through their fingers, you fall in with a medical man; and thirdly you are within reach of a house where every comfort is to hand, and every second inmate is just a born nurse."

"Especially Larry," remarked Arthur with a smile.

"Oh, you're getting better fast, that is clear," said Larry. "Look here, doctor, it's getting married makes nurses of people. Bride here was no good at all at all before, and now she ties up wounds as easily as I kiss a pretty girl."

"I have no doubt you are duly qualified to perform that operation," said the doctor, "but with regard to any other I question your capabilities. Miss Kathleen also seems to share your propensity for giving wounds instead of healing them, 'only with eyes instead of a sword.'"

"Are you going to undertake to cure all Kathie's victims, doctor?" asked Arthur.

"I am afraid that's past my skill," returned the doctor laughing; "already there are several bad cases, and in another three hours 'twill be

the undertaker, not the medical, that's wanted for Neville and Power."

"I'll take them in hand," quoth Larry; "we have to get back in the shortest time possible. Let Power have a few miles on that bone-setting nag of his at my pace, he'll be less sentimental."

"I would rather you prescribed for him than for me," said Arthur.

"Aye indeed," laughed the doctor. "Listen now, Mrs. Gordon; last night I found this poor fellow had some cloth and a splinter in the deep wound in his side, and so it was absolutely necessary to put him to some pain to spare worse in the future. Mr. Walter lifted him, and held him as cleverly as could be. All I asked of this gentleman here was to hold a candle for me. Now Mrs. Gordon, would you believe me? my patient never opened his lips, though I know what he felt, but this brother of yours, first he grew pale, then his hand shook, and at last down went the candle, and he cried, 'Oh confound it, doctor, do you think a fellow's made of wood?'"

"Well," said Larry, "I daresay I could have stood your cutting and carving decently if it was on myself, but the deliberate way you were torturing that fellow there was awful to watch."

"So you thought a blazing candle on the top of me would be soothing?" remarked Arthur.

"Counter-irritation," answered Larry. "I

don't mind letting a man have it when one is in a fight, but I don't like that cold-blooded work."

"How did it end?" I asked.

"Mr. Walter fetched his mother, and it was just admirable to see her," replied Dr. Somers. "Ah, the ladies are the bravest, there is no doubt."

"Doctor, I'll give you just forty minutes from now," said Larry, looking at his watch.

"Right, sir. I shall be ready."

"Bride, you'll come and see us off," said Larry; "we're a beautiful sight I assure you, ma'am."

"So I thought yesterday," I returned; "but I will come if I can."

"Good-bye, Arthur, lad, the chief will be pleased to hear you're mending. I must see after the fellows."

And Larry walked off singing:

> "We are the boys that the girls all adore,
> Sure 'tis ourselves is the ladies' delight,
> And when the cannons and musketry roar,
> Always we're found in the best of the fight."

The doctor looked after him, and remarked smiling:

"He's a fine lad that, and as dashing and fearless a fellow as ever stepped. 'Tis queer the tricks nerves play one; he could not help it last night; I believe he would rather have had to bear it himself than look on."

The doctor then went on to give me

directions about Arthur, and I said sadly, how much I wished he were not leaving so soon.

"Oh, you must not get nervous now," he said kindly; "so brave as you have been all along, and so well as you have got on. And indeed he is much stronger than I thought yesterday. Though I will not answer for how it might have gone if he had had much more to bear then, it has done him no harm. The fainting was caused by want of proper food as well as loss of blood, and there is no fear of his starving here."

There was no doctor for miles, the nearest had died just as the troubles began, and no one had replaced him, so I knew there was no one to go to in case of need; but the doctor gave me minute directions, and with mother and Walter at hand it was not so bad. So I gave Arthur his breakfast, and then by his wish went down to see the foxhunters off.

Kathleen, of course, was in her glory, exchanging saucy speeches with every one, answering sighs with jests, and favouring all alike, the pretty, provoking creature. Larry was rather proud of being in command, and I suspect not above being gratified by the admiration of our household, who were of course all inspecting "Masther Larry" and his men from above or below. The last words were said, and they were mounted at last, and Larry shouting, "Ready; trot!" they went off at a good round pace, and watching Mr. Power's

fat form bumping along, I wondered if Larry's cure would prove effectual.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" sighed Kathie. "Why could not they stay a little longer? This is dreadful. What will I do to get a little diversion now? Walter, may I ride the colt at the bar?"

"Aye, child, if breaking your neck will mend your heart," said Walter.

"It would take a better man than either of them to break my heart, sir," Kathie cried scornfully. "You must think it brittle."

"I doubt your being old enough to have one, my dear little girl," replied Walter provokingly.

As he expected, Kathie, who was quite child enough to hate being thought young, boxed his ears at once; a romp ensued, which ended in his going to saddle the colt, and promising to see her and teach it to leap at the practising bar, for with her perfect hand and seat and light weight she was really valuable to train the young horses.

I returned to Arthur, who had gained strength marvellously in the last twelve hours, and seemed very well able to take food and talk, though still extremely weak and in some pain.

Late in the afternoon the door opened very gently, and little Mollie crept in on tiptoe. She was a great pet with Arthur, and he stretched out his hand to her saying:

"What a good little Mollie to come and see me! Sister Bride must lift you on my bed."

Half shyly Mollie took the kitten from her apron, and offered it him, whispering:

"I thought it would amuse you, it amuses me when I has a cold."

Arthur stroked her golden curls, and thanked her, but instead of chattering as usual, she fixed her great blue eyes on him wonderingly and solemnly.

"Mollie, what are you thinking of?" I said.

"I'se puzzled," answered Molly seriously.

"What at, dearie?"

Mollie hung her head, but at last said gravely, "Bride, how *did* you put Arthur together again, when he was cut all to pieces?"

"Oh, Mollie, Mollie," cried Arthur. "Don't make me laugh so, it hurts me dreadfully. Did you think Bride sewed my arms and legs on again like she does on your dollies?"

"But you *were* all cut to pieces, Arthur," persisted Mollie. "I heard the doctor say so to the fat gentleman that put Kathleen's rose inside his coat, and then could not button it it was so tight."

This revelation made Arthur laugh again, and having assured Mollie that he was well enough mended not to fall to pieces again, he began to ask her about the rose; but just then there was a tap at the door, and Kathie

called gently, "Bride dear, here are some strawberries for you both."

"Come in, Kathleen, won't you?" said Arthur. "I have not seen you yet."

"May I?" she said. "Shall I not disturb him, Bride? Will you send me away when I should go?"

"Thank you, Kathie, for thinking of the fruit," said Arthur. "Oh, these are splendid ones, and I am so thirsty and hot. Come, Mollie, you must feed me, and have some too."

But Mollie said they were to make him better, and would not touch one, for she was not a greedy child. Kathleen, with a spring, landed herself on the footboard of the bed, which was an old carved oak four-poster with a heavy canopy. Kathie was so active and graceful, nothing she did seemed hoydenish. And the old bed was too solid for her light weight to jar Arthur, so she sat there swaying herself carelessly, and catching at the fringe over her head, but all the time looking at Arthur much as Mollie had done.

He noticed her at last and said, "Are you speculating how Bride fitted me together again like Mollie?"

"No I am not," replied Kathleen. "I was wishing I could fall desperately in love with you for a while."

This startling speech was delivered as seriously as Mollie herself could have spoken it. Arthur answered:

"Really, Kathleen, I am flattered; but will Bride agree, do you think?"

"Oh, any other man would do just as well," said Kathie composedly.

"That's crushing, Kathie," he laughed.

"Oh, it's not the man I'm wanting," she said. "But I'd like to try what there is in falling in love."

"Never fear, Kathie," said Arthur, "your turn will come; but what has put it in your head just now?"

"I have been to see little Pat and Norah, and she told me all about Bride facing the rebels and all; and I would like just to try for half an hour what there can be in love at all, at all, to make a little timid mouse like that into a lioness."

Arthur answered her, looking at me fondly:

"Ah, Kathleen, none of you will ever know the half Bride dared and did for me; and indeed I do not know it myself."

"Oh, nonsense!" I cried. "It was no courage on my part, for I never stopped to think of myself at all."

"Sweetheart, we will not quarrel over it," smiled my husband. "Some people would call that heroism."

"Well, well," said Kathie, "it's a very queer thing it seems to me; I can't think how folks begin."

"Kathie, did you ever slide down the bannisters?" asked Arthur gravely.

"Sure you never saw me do so, did you?" said Kathie roguishly, for he had caught her at it at least half a dozen times.

"Well, falling in love's just like that, Kathleen, once you're off you can't stop. Did you ever slide up again?"

"Oh, don't talk such nonsense, Arthur; as if any one could."

"Precisely what I wish to impress on your young mind, the falling in love's easy enough; but as to getting out again, as if any one could; so mind how you try it, missie."

"What made you fall in love with Bride?" asked Kathie abruptly.

"Because on finding perfection I was determined to win it if I could."

"Oh, what fine words," laughed Kathleen saucily. "As for Bride, 'tis easy enough to know, she never could refuse to do anything if she was bothered enough."

"Really, Kathleen," said Arthur, "you are in a most cut-and-thrust mood to-day. I flattered myself any other man would not do as well for Bride."

"Oh, you need not be fishing for compliments. Sure I know you stand six foot two and you're good-looking enough, and you began by nearly breaking your neck, and Bride was sorry for you; and it seems to me you mean going on getting destroyed. By-the-bye, Arthur, they drank your health last night, and flattered you up to the skies; but

after all, sure I think the most you did was to run away at the right moment."

I was indignant, but Arthur laughed till he was obliged to stop, for it hurt him so.

"Kathie, Kathie, I never saw your match," he said. "I quite agree with you, that was exactly what I did do; but then, you know, 'he who fights and runs away will live to fight another day,' and that's what your fat friend felt doubtless."

"Ah, let me alone now, Arthur, you tease.. Sure there's one comfort; as marriage has made such an Amazon of Bride, I'll live to see you a henpecked husband for all your inches."

"And I'll hope to live to see you transformed into a very Griselda for all your spirit, missie!" retorted Arthur.

"May your head never ache till then, as uncle says," said Kathie springing off the bed. "Come, Mollie girl, we will tire Arthur out, and then Bride will fight us. Oh, Bride, by-the-bye, Norah bid me tell you, with her duty, Tom Corish was all right, whatever that may mean?"

And off went Kathleen, whistling "Gramachree Molly," as merrily as a blackbird.

CHAPTER XIX.

"'Fear ye nae that,' quo' the Laird's jock;
'A faint heart ne'er won fair ladie;
Work thou within, we'll work without,
And I'll be sworn we'll set thee free!'"

FATHER was away when we returned to Ballydorough, staying with Uncle George; but two nights after Mollie came and said:

"Arthur, if you are not asleep, and it won't wake you, father would like to see you."

"I am not asleep, Mollie," he said, but as father's step was heard he raised himself rather uneasily, and the colour flushed in his face. Father kissed me, and held his hand out, saying kindly to Arthur:

"My boy, I am sorry to see you lying here, but they tell me you are better."

"Ah, sir! I tried to act for the best, but all I have done has gone wrong, and instead of saving Bride from danger I took her into it; and now I am only a trouble to her," replied Arthur sadly.

"She thrives on it, I think," said father with a smile, pinching my cheeks. "My boy, one cannot foresee how things will turn out. You did your duty, a man can do no more."

"I wonder if I did do my duty?" returned

Arthur. "It seems to me now as if I was bent on having my own will, and this is the end of it. Mr. Kavanagh, you can't tell what it was to lie in that shed, and feel every minute that Bride might be exposed to any danger and I could no more protect her than a child could."

"Gordon, when a man is weak things magnify themselves," said father kindly. "Bride is none the worse, so you need not dwell on that now; and do you think, my lad, it would have been better to stay safely in England, and leave your little sweetheart here to take her chance, or to have turned traitor to protect her at the expense of your honour? What say you, little woman?"

"Oh, I think Arthur did just what was best," said I eagerly.

"If you and Mr. Kavanagh are content, dear, I ought to be," said Arthur. "Perhaps it is for the best."

"These troubled times make men think of serious things," said father gravely. "It seems to me, my boy, perhaps this is a lesson to teach you not to glory too much in your strength, for you were brought low in a moment, and this little timid thing had to protect you; and it was best for her too, for it has taught her courage and self-reliance, and mother and I will be far less afraid to trust her out of our sight."

"That is another way of looking at it," Arthur said thoughtfully. "And at least I am ungrateful not to think more of the kindness shown me by every one, high and low, for Bride's sake."

"Things are rarely so black but they might be worse," answered father. "And here comes mother to see I am not hurting you. If for nothing else I am glad she has you to think of instead of the bad times," he added in a lower tone as mother came in with Arthur's supper, and putting down the tray began to make his bed comfortable, for no one could arrange pillows and covers as mother did; then she said he looked weary, and must be talked to no more; and sent me off with father while she sat with Arthur.

So I went down for a while, and heard that Uncle George had gone to Wexford on business, and father thought it rash and foolish; but he would have his own way, as he usually did.

Also the news of the defeat of the king's troops at Tubberneering was now confirmed. Walter had met an eye-witness, who described how by the inexperience of their colonel the troops were marched straight into a pass lined thickly with the enemy's men, who shot or piked them all, leaving hardly a man alive to tell the tale. There was a rumour, too, that Enniscorthy was in the hands of the

insurgents but that seemed uncertain. However, on every side the tidings were grave; for several friends of ours had lost their lives on both sides, and the fate of several other families seemed quite uncertain, as there were contradictory reports.

Jim Walker, Lizzie's elder brother, was dead, and one of the O'Connors, but Sam was unhurt so far. And then mother came down and told me Arthur was sleeping soundly; and somehow our talk drifted to home matters, and Evie and she discussed whether it would be wiser to preserve gooseberries or raspberries first, and whether the red currants should be made into jam or jelly; and I agreed to go with Evie and look at them, for I rather prided myself on my skill in preserving. And then I went back to Arthur's room again, and he looked so peaceful and comfortable, that it seemed to me the jam-making was the reality and all the talk of war and bloodshed just a romance.

After the first few days Arthur mended wonderfully fast, for he was by nature a very strong man.

Norah had been to see him one day, and we were talking of Tom Corish, who was still safe somewhere near.

Arthur and I were discussing how best to help them in the future, for Tom as a deserter would be in an awkward position, when Mollie ran in and cried:

"Uncle George is took prisoner, and put in a prison!"

"What can the child mean? Do go and see, Bride," said Arthur.

I ran down and found Mollie's news too true. Uncle George, rashly venturing too near Wexford, was in the hands of the rebels.

"What can be done, I wonder?" cried mother. "A ransom, Frank?"

Father shook his head.

"If that would do, Mary, I would spend my last penny, but I fear it's useless. Oh dear, if George would but have listened to reason."

Kinsella had brought the news and stood by considering; he was a very shrewd old man; Keeran was quite as faithful, but not half so clever.

"See, masther, I have got an idea, sor," remarked Kinsella at last. "Maybe I could just sperrit Masther George out of the hands of the spalpeens."

"If you do, Kinsella, you shall be a rich man for life," cried father.

"Sor, you might as well offer a Mullinavat pig a candle to go to bed with," returned Kinsella indignantly. "Cock me up with riches indeed; as if the likes of me did not owe the likes of you enough already."

Father smiled, and held out his hand to the old man, saying:

"I beg your pardon, Kinsella, I ought to

have known you better. What can you contrive?"

But Kinsella was mysterious, and would only say he must talk a bit to one of the boys, and we were to ask no questions, if we missed horse or man.

There was nothing to be done but trust him, for we were powerless to assist uncle; and next day Walter reported the absence of old Kinsella himself and father's best hunter, and when in the afternoon I met Norah, she seemed as full of secrets as Kinsella, so I wondered if Tom Corish were in the plot.

The suspense of the next two or three days was hard for father to bear, he was unaccustomed to letting others take matters out of his hands; but at last one afternoon a horse galloped up to the door; it was Kathie, who was exercising the colt, she sprang off and rushed in exclaiming eagerly:

"Father, father, it's all right! Uncle's safe, and he's just here with his wife! Oh, what fun, what fun!" And Kathleen caught up her habit and danced about with peals of laughter.

"Kathleen, you mad girl, be quiet do, and tell us what has happened at once," cried father, jumping up and upsetting the ink in his excitement.

"Come and see for yourself, father," exclaimed Kathie, still laughing, and running out again.

We all followed her as she flew up the drive, wondering what she could possibly mean.

There came the old hunter Rollo, pacing steadily with a double burden on his back, apparently a well-to-do farmer and his wife; the latter seated as usual on a pillion holding her spouse round the waist.

But a nearer view revealed the stout farmer to be none other than uncle himself, and under the wife's hood peeped Tom Corish's light hair and blue eyes.

Altogether it was so comical that in the reaction of his great anxiety father laughed as unrestrainedly as Kathie herself.

Uncle George merely remarked drily: "I'm glad I can divert you, Frank;" and dismounting handed down Tom as politely as if he were really a lady.

"Walter, the old nag deserves your best care," said uncle. "In Kinsella's absence you had better supervise the rubbing down, which probably my worthy spouse will undertake."

Walter led off Rollo, accompanied by Tom, whose military stride suited oddly with his disguise; and every one questioned uncle at once, but he declared it impossible to enter into explanations until he had a clean shirt, so let us wonder a little longer.

Presently he came down looking as dapper as usual, for he always kept some clothes at

our house, and then we learnt how faithfully and clever good old Kinsella had been, and how much he had risked for uncle.

He had always been on friendly terms with some of "the other side," as he called them, and was aware that Father Rourke had been carried, much against his will, to one of their camps.

Here, therefore, Kinsella betook himself, and besought the kind old man to use his influence with Bagenal Harvey, or any other of the more merciful leaders, in behalf of uncle, but in vain; as it chanced all were absent from the camp, and with any others Father Rourke knew it was useless to plead.

Indeed, his own views were known to be so merciful that any day his life might be endangered when the savage passions of the insurgents were roused.

"Oh, murther, what will we do now?" said Kinsella, who had taken Tom with him, trusting to his desertion at Scullabogue being unknown, as no great discipline was maintained among the rebels.

Tom remarked: "If they only had a written order, he'd get Masther George out safely and get him home somehow."

"Suppose you write one, Tom?" said Kinsella. "Sure writing is writing, who's to know?"

"I would cheerfully," replied Tom, "but I can't write no more than yourself."

"Holy Vargin, what a pity!" said Kinsella. "Maybe the father would; let's thry him."

"Oh, he'll write it in the scrapin' of a pen," said Tom, who had no idea what he was asking.

Father Rourke doubted at first, but his good-nature overcame his scruples. He scrawled a few lines ordering the release of George Kavanagh. Off went the conspirators triumphantly and presented the document.

The man in authority doubted at first, but Tom's knowledge of the rebel leaders carried them through, and Uncle George was brought to them.

To get disguises was easy enough, and Kinsella with a spice of malice supposed "Masther George would rather have a wife than a halter about his neck," and so his escape was safely effected.

CHAPTER XX.

"Be patient: time will reinstate
Thy health and fortunes."

Arthur was an excellent patient while his extreme weakness lasted; but with returning strength he grew very restless and impatient of the tedious confinement and inclined to neglect the necessary precautions. For, though wonderfully recovered, the wound in his side was not so healed but that any exertion might reopen it.

The weather was unusually hot, too, and this did not mend matters. Mother only laughed, and said, "Men were all alike, and it was the most hopeful sign possible," and reminded me of several hunting accidents we had had with father and the boys, and how they had rebelled at all nursing; and that Arthur had a naturally hot temper and had never been taught to curb it much, so I must not mind a sharp word.

But somehow one is accustomed to give and take with brothers; but that a lover can be hasty surprises one, at least just at first: though indeed there was every excuse to be made for Arthur under the circumstances.

However, one day it had been hotter than

ever, and Arthur harder to please in consequence.

Every one chanced to be occupied, so he had no visitors to divert his thoughts, and I was tired and stupid, for owing to the heat he had been very sleepless for several nights, and my rest of course was also broken. Altogether things were going badly, when Uncle George walked in.

I think he caught some hasty words of Arthur's, but he only said:

"How is your health to-day, Nephew Gordon?"

"Oh, I am well enough," Arthur said impatiently; "as well as a man can be forced to submit to tiresome precautions, and lie chained here in these stirring times, instead of doing his duty and giving a helping hand."

"Stirring times?" replied uncle. "Well, there are certainly stirring times going or below, for there is a prodigious jam-making; but I am of opinion that Niece Eveleen's help is more valuable than yours would prove. Patience is your best remedy."

"Heaven knows it is one I have had enough of lately," Arthur exclaimed, throwing off some of his coverings irritably.

"I'm glad to hear it," replied uncle calmly. "From personal observation I should have rather said you were behaving like a spoilt child, instead of showing the patience and self-control of a man."

Arthur's dark eyes flashed with passion, he had a fiery temper, and he exclaimed:

"Your grey hair protects you, sir, had any one else dared speak so to me——"

"You would call him out, I suppose," interrupted uncle imperturbably. "Grey hair indeed! My dear fellow, it's a wig, but I grant a well-made one."

And uncle carefully lifted off his white toupee with its queue and black bow, displayed it to Arthur, and walking to the mirror, replaced it daintily on his head, remarking rather sentimentally:

"You could not recall that look, could you, for a moment? It took me back full thirty years to the season of your mother's *début*, when I had the misfortune to break her fan. I can see her now."

In spite of Arthur's vexation, he could not help smiling, and when uncle, having adjusted his wig to his liking, turned from the glass, he said more quietly:

"At least, sir, I have a right to demand an explanation of your very plain speaking."

"Oh, certainly," said uncle briskly. "Let me see! My offence consisted in calling you a spoilt child, did it not? Well, I think I should define a spoilt child as a human being whom every one combines to do their best to please, tend, amuse, and indulge at the expense of their own wishes. For instance, the most willing of wives may prefer sitting still to

running up and down stairs fifty times on so hot a day; yet when this human being is thwarted in anything, though for his own sake, he cannot keep his temper decently."

And here uncle produced a jewelled snuff box, and delicately took an invisible pinch. Arthur was silent for a moment, and I dreaded his answer, knowing he was all unused to control. But though hasty he was thoroughly good-hearted, and with a smile he said:

"Uncle, I thank you for your reproof. Never man needed it more. Bride, my poor child, I have been terribly selfish, will you forgive me?"

Uncle nodded his head approvingly as I kissed Arthur, and said:

"May Heaven forgive us all as easily as the women do, and there'll be hopes for our salvation yet."

He laid his white hand on Arthur as he spoke. Uncle had beautiful hands and was rather proud of them.

"Poor lad! you are as hot as Sister Mary's preserves. Bride, why do you ladies always make jam in such weather?"

"Why, uncle, the fruit would spoil by keeping," I laughed, "and we should have no preserves for winter."

"Well, child, though possibly you want to preserve this husband of yours for winter, I don't think it's necessary to stew him; surely he would be better in a cooler place?"

"You will give me no chance of proving my self-control if you remove the cause of my grumbling," said Arthur smiling.

"If I give a lesson, I like to help in the learning," returned uncle, going to the door and shouting for Walter.

Walter appeared in a few minutes, he drew a long breath and cried. "This room is like an oven."

"Precisely why I called you, Walter. Gordon must be moved."

Walter gave uncle a droll look, saying:

"Do you propose that you and I carry him, sir? Because, you see, Bride chose her husband by the yard, as she does her gowns, and it's no light matter to lift the gentleman. If we could get an ass-car up stairs, now——"

"If you fetch the car and draw it yourself, it might answer," retorted uncle sharply. "I thought you were a lad of sense and ideas."

"Give one time, uncle," said Walter laughing. "Let me think. Bride, I have it. Where's the old chintz couch?"

In the green-room," I returned.

"Come along, then, it's the very thing."

Away we went and found the couch, which had been used for illness ever since our childish days, a wide easy old sofa, much the worse for wear, as to covering, for it had been cut with pocket-knives, stained, and even burnt here and there; but we were all

attached to its curious old cover, which represented the history of the martyrs and had been brought from France by an ancestor, so it was never changed.

Walter and I easily ran the couch down the passages, as it had good castors, and pushed it alongside the bed.

"Now, uncle, lend me a hand," said, Walter mischievously, well knowing uncle never exerted himself.

But Arthur professed himself able to move with very little help. So Walter aided him, while uncle and I went to select the room he should be taken to, and decided on the old play-room, a curious room in the older part of the house, but beautifully cool on account of its aspect and its thick walls, ornamented still with drawings done by us children and of a most primitive nature, cows and snails, chiefly differing in the matter of legs.

"Oh, this is a relief," said Arthur. "I am grateful to you, sir, for the suggestion; I can be a model of patience in here."

"A few degrees of temperature often make a difference between a saint and a sinner," rejoined uncle. "Indigestible food is the cause of half the murders in the world; the rebels would not commit such atrocities, but for that awful habit of charring lumps of flesh on pikes by way of dressing it."

"Bride, my dear, listen to the words of wisdom," laughed Arthur. "It is entirely in

your hands to make a model of me, by good housewifery."

"Added to a little of uncle's good advice," I said.

"Well, I object to wives on principle," said uncle gravely. "But still, if a man, in spite of all advice, takes one to himself, he must do the best he can by her for the honour of his sex."

"Did you practise what you preach when you had a wife, uncle?" I asked.

"Bride, I must beg of you never to allude to that awful ordeal. I assure you my dreams are haunted by horrible delusions, that my stalwart spouse was in reality of your sex," said uncle seriously. "I woke with a shudder, to thank Providence that my matrimonial alliance was not a permanency."

Arthur sighed heartily, and uncle went on:

"I am thankful to say my wife is beyond the seas."

"Tom Corish gone?" I cried. "When? where?"

"Two days since tidings came that his regiment had found out his whereabouts, and he would infallibly be shot, so Frank, by way of asserting his magisterial dignity, examines the boy, as to his share in the Scullabogue barn, and other trifles of the same kind. 'Sure and sure, your honour, I'm just as innicent as an unborn babe, and I'll niver do it again, sir, I'll swear by the saints, if you let me off this

onst,' says Tom; and Norah went on her knees, and there was a fine scene. And as even a magistrate could hardly give up a fellow that had saved two of his nearest relations, curiously as magisterial minds are constituted, why, it ended in Tom getting passage at Waterford, in an outbound vessel trading to America."

"I wish I had known," cried Arthur. "How ungrateful he must think me to have given him nothing for saving my life."

"He is not penniless," said uncle quietly. "You can give what you will to Norah, she will probably have to follow him."

Uncle was one of the most generous men possible, and no doubt Tom was well endowed for his help in uncle's escape.

This satisfied Arthur, and the cool room did wonders for him; his convalescence from that day went on without hindrance, so that he was able soon to get downstairs with help.

CHAPTER XXI.

"'Submit we, then, to force,' said Clare,
'But lest this barbarous lord despair,
His purposed aim to win,
Let him take, living, land and life:
But to be Marmion's wedded wife,
For me were deadly sin.'"

It was the second day of Arthur's coming down, and he was lying out on some cushions on the front door-steps. The great heat of the day was over, and Eveleen, Mollie, and I were sitting out too; Mollie was feeding Arthur with fruit, and Evie and I working and chatting.

Presently from the courtyard rode Kathleen.

"Arthur, I have brought the colt to show you; is he not improved?"

The colt was a splendid animal, which father had bred and was very proud of, and Kathie equally so; it was named "The Knight."

Arthur was a thorough lover of horses, and could not resist rising to pass his hand over its satiny bay coat, and feeling the delicate limbs, which were as strong as steel.

"He is as near perfection as can be, Kathie," he said at last, "let us see his action."

Kathie put the creature through its paces, and asked us to go a little way, and see it jump. "Can you come, Arthur, it's not far? just to the paddock; there is a bar there now."

It was close by so we went with her, and Kathleen rode over the bar several times, Kinsella raising it higher and higher, till he refused to do so again.

"He could do twice as much, Kinsella," cried Kathie indignantly.

"Sure I'm not contradicting you, my jewel, but that's high enough; ask Mr. Gordon what he thinks."

"Quite high enough, Kathleen; this is not the hunting-fields remember."

"Oh, you're a cautious pair, one as bad as the other," exclaimed Kathie; "good-bye to you all."

And suddenly turning the colt she galloped it across the paddock, and put it at the gate; he rose splendidly and cleared it by a foot or more, and away they went across the park.

"They are a well-matched pair—eh, Kinsella?" said Arthur; "hard to tell which is the handsomest."

"Or the most wilful," added Kinsella solemnly.

"I would like to take Kathie and the Knight into the park in London," said Arthur as he resettled himself on his cushions comfortably.

"Would not the pair of them cause a sensation just?"

"I would not envy you the charge," said Evie laughing, "at least, if the London dandies are as inflammable as Larry's foxhunters."

"I wonder where Larry is to-day?" said Mollie; "I wish he was here to eat cherries."

The child's words made us grave, for we had no very recent news of Larry, and only knew that men were flocking in great masses to Vinegar Hill to join the rebels, and that Enniscorthy was in their hands. And the fugitives had undergone terrible hardships in flying to Wexford and other places; delicate women, some with babes scarce a week old, and children clinging to them, having to quit their houses for their lives, some even rising from their beds to join in the general exodus, and running along the roads, till in the darkness they lost friends or missed their children, and dropped down in despair, often never to rise again. And the children getting bewildered wandered till some kind soul took pity on them, and some never again found friends or parents; others, though they kept together better, lost all their property and were impoverished for life, for all suffer during war, and specially a civil war. So we talked of these things with lowered voices and saddened hearts, and Arthur wished himself strong again, till Evie reminded him he would be bound to return to his regiment then, though Dr. Somers had contrived to get word to his colonel of his wounds, and he had sick leave.

"Here comes Kathie back," remarked Eveleen at last.

"Where are your eyes, Evie?" said Arthur,

"that is not Kathie unless she has a new horse."

"It is a bay horse," replied Evie, "so is the Knight."

"You and Bride are both fair, Eveleen, but there is no other resemblance between you. That horse's stride is not half the length of the Knight's, nor is he as tall."

"Who else could it be?" said Evie, still incredulous.

When the horse and its rider drew nearer Arthur proved right; it was Lizzie Walker on an old brown nag.

Eveleen and I ran out to meet her, as she cantered up.

"Bride, I'm come to throw myself on you, for I'm homeless," said Lizzie.

"All the more welcome, dear," I cried. "Get down, and here is Kinsella to take your horse."

The poor girl dismounted; she looked terribly worn and aged, though perhaps handsomer than ever with the pitiful look in her large eyes.

"Miss Walker, you are tired out," said Arthur; "you must share my cushions, it is cooler here than indoors."

Lizzie sat down mechanically and began to cry. Evie tried to comfort her. Arthur whispered to me, "She is over-excited and hysterical, get her some wine."

I did so, and though she refused it at first, Arthur made her drink it; she smiled through her tears, saying:

"Does Bride submit as meekly to your orders?"

"Bride is a model in every respect," returned Arthur lightly.

"You've not forgotten your fine compliments among us Irish," said Lizzie, who was regaining her composure.

"On the contrary, I owe so much to Ireland, I can hardly compliment her inhabitants enough."

"Especially on their pikes," said Lizzie in her old abrupt fashion. "Well, I'm glad they did not spoil your beauty, such as it is."

"The claret has done you good," retorted Arthur; "with another glass you will be able to give me one of your old lectures on the vanity that you used to declare was my besetting sin."

"So it was," replied Lizzie, and I have no doubt in life Bride there is making you ten times worse."

"How lucky for him, then, that you are come to counteract her spoiling," said Eveleen, who had been for some cake for her cousin.

"Lucky! Sure 'tis myself can bring no good luck anywhere," said Lizzie, relapsing into her desponding mood. "I wish I had never been born."

"Would you cruelly deprive society of one of its brightest ornaments?" said Arthur with a slight affectation of drawl and lisp, which, as he intended, roused her to exclaim.

"Don't be such an oumadaun, Gordon!" Whereat he laughed like a schoolboy, and catching sight of mother at a window, called to her to come and protect him. She came down wondering who we had with us; but Lizzie ran to her, and beginning to sob again begged to be allowed to stay.

"My dear silly child! Of course you can stay," said mother stroking her hair from her hot face. "How often have we asked you to do so? Come, now, be quiet and sensible."

"Or I shall have to weep with thee, tear for tear," remarked Arthur, quoting one of our own poet's last ballads.

His joking tones and mother's calm ways quieted her at last, and she began to tell her trouble. Walter had joined her now, and listened also. She said their house had long been the resort of many of the rebel leaders, and that her father and brothers were completely influenced by them, and dazzled by dreams of the most brilliantly impossible future, in which they were to rise to the highest honours when Ireland was conquered by the rebels. Meanwhile, though many of these men, like poor Bagenal Harvey, were influenced by real patriotism and desire for the general welfare of the nation, by far the larger proportion sought only to gratify private ends of their own, and cared only for some personal revenge, or more often for mere greed, preferring to

rob others of their property rather than to earn their living by honest labour.

Unluckily for poor Lizzie her good looks and dashing carriage attracted the admiration of one of these men, Flanagan by name, a ruffianly fellow sprung from the lowest grade of society.

Lizzie indignantly repulsed his advances, but in vain. At length she appealed to her father for protection, and found to hope for help from him was indeed to trust to a broken reed. He actually shed tears, but weakly declared he could not help her, and she must marry Flanagan, and tried to tempt her by promises of such worldly distinction for Flanagan and herself as hardly could have been believed in by a child. Yet he apparently repeated them in all good faith.

Seeing how helpless he was, Lizzie next went to her elder brother; but he had become utterly demoralized, and told her to think herself only too much honoured. It was not all men in Flanagan's position would have stood about the marriage rite, and as for her fine English lover, he had renounced her, and boasted of his power and her weakness openly.

So far did matters go that the marriage day was fixed, and several of the men who held authority came from Vinegar Hill and other camps, and with them Loo and Fanny, both married; the former glorying in her position, describing the fights she had taken part in,

and to Lizzie's horror displaying a dagger, which she declared to be stained with "Orange blood."

Fan was much quieter, in evident terror of the man she belonged to, and seizing a moment with her sister, she whispered to her to die rather than to wed Flanagan.

Lizzie was a prisoner and watched carefully, and how to escape she knew not; but unexpectedly Bagenal Harvey and Colclough rode up; to them she contrived to describe her position.

Harvey, who seemed utterly desponding, told her he felt he was a doomed man; but Colclough appeared more hopeful, and he bade her trust him and be on the alert, and he would at least get her out of the house; more he was powerless to do.

Her window was too high from the ground for any one to escape from; but late at night she heard a low whistle, and a ladder was put up to it, and though she saw no one she guessed Colclough put it there.

A farm held by an old widow was not very far away, and Lizzie made her way there and besought aid. The woman, though in great terror of the possible consequences to herself, bade Lizzie take the old nag and a still older saddle out of the stable, and she would take care not to watch, so could answer no questions, and leave it to be supposed Lizzie had helped herself.

Of course Lizzie did not relate her story as concisely as I have written it. We all interrupted her with questions and remarks, but when she had told us all up to this point she said:

"And now the worst is to come. I overheard enough to know Sam O'Connor is urging an attack on Ballydorough, and Flanagan will join him now, though before he hung back. Mrs. Kavanagh, dear, sure when I'm rested a bit I had best be away again."

"Where to, Lizzie?" said mother, with her usual gentle smile. "My poor girl, could you believe really we could drive you away?"

"Sure I know you are just an angel, Mrs. Kavanagh," cried Lizzie. "But ask Walter, or Gordon, or Mr. Kavanagh. Can't I see in Walter's face he's thinking of Eveleen already?"

"Oh, Lizzie, would you make Walter out a coward?" exclaimed Evie hotly before Walter could answer.

"You'll have Eveleen calling you out in a minute, Lizzie," he said good-humouredly. "But, to tell the truth, I was just wondering why Sam wishes to injure us whose guest he has so often been."

"Will I tell them, Bride?" said Lizzie.

"Why not?" said I innocently enough, marvelling why she appealed to me in particular.

"'Tis because he is so mad that you took Gordon there instead of himself; and he says you played him false, and he'll have you yet, and shoot Gordon in the fight."

"Oh, Lizzie!" I exclaimed passionately, "he could not say so. I did not encourage him, I hated him always; it's a wicked, cruel lie; I never even knew he wanted me!"

And half ashamed, half afraid Arthur might be vexed, I hid my burning face in my hands and began to cry.

"Little woman, do not trouble yourself about it," said Arthur, raising himself, and drawing down my hands. "It is no news to me anyhow, Bride."

"Well, you have kept it at the back of your head," said Walter. "Did Sam himself confide in you?"

"Yes, he did, when I was at Tomadilly," returned Arthur coolly, "when he was in his usual half-seas-over condition, one evening before ever I saw any of you."

"So you determined to cut him out at once?" said mischievous Evie.

"You want to know too much, laughed Arthur; "I won't gratify your curiosity."

"Ah, do now, do tell me," said Evie, in the most coaxing of voices.

"Well, if you must know," replied Arthur, "I gathered from Sam's rodomontades such a false impression of Bride that I mistook Kathie for her, and was riding after her out

of curiosity when the yellow colt nearly broke my neck."

"Well, of all the ugly, ill-conditioned brutes that's the worst," said Walter. "But maybe Bride's of another opinion, seeing what came of his jumping short."

"And now if Evie is quite satisfied," said mother, "she and Bride had better carry Lizzie off and find her some clothes, for Bride has something to tell her."

So we took Lizzie upstairs and got her all she wanted, and I told her Major Tracy's message.

Poor girl! it was long since she had heard of him, so closely had she been kept, and she laughed and cried over it, though maintaining it would be wrong to marry him, as a king's man should not mate with a rebel's daughter. But Evie and I petted her, and persuaded her he knew best what was good for him, and all would come right, for we young wives who had married each the one she loved could not believe there could be any other real form of happiness.

Downstairs on the steps father and uncle had joined the others, and were discussing Lizzie's tidings; and Arthur, who was privately more annoyed with Sam than he had shown before me, started up at last, and began to pace up and down on the gravel with an angry imprecation on Sam and his impertinence.

"Now, fire-eater, just cool yourself," said uncle provokingly; "you'll do yourself an injury, and that would just delight Sam."

"I only wish it was your wife, sir, that had been insulted thus," said Arthur, unable to control his temper, and forgetting uncle's peculiarities. A vision of uncle with Tom Corish on the pillion set off every one, even mother, into fits of laughter, in which Arthur himself joined in a minute; but still half vexed he said:

"You can hardly expect me to do nothing but lay quiet like a sick girl, when there is a rebel force coming to our very doors; I must and will be of some good."

"If you understand your own trade of fighting, lad, your brains may be of great good, whatever your four bones are," said uncle, taking out his snuff-box.

"Sure to-morrow will be time enough to prepare, won't it?" said Walter. "They had to search the woods round Ballinaslat first for Lizzie, then to get men together, and after all they're not much disciplined."

"Walter, you're just as bad as the rest of you Irishmen," cried Arthur, "always for putting off till to-morrow. 'Tis just how it's all come, from putting off looking to the people's grievances to see if they were real or not, and as for underrating their discipline, has not Walpole's defeat at Tubberneering taught you a lesson yet? And the last

slaughter at Enniscorthy and Three Rocks, it's half of it from taking things too easy. I say let's have everything ready to-night, as if we knew they would be here before cockcrow." Arthur stopped from sheer want of breath, then added, "If I am too hasty I beg your pardon, Walter."

"All right, lad," said Walter, "I believe you are wise."

"And I am sure of it," said father. "Now, Arthur, you shall first state your plans, and we will consider them."

"How lucky the strawberry jam is made," said little Mollie solemnly. She had come back unheeded and had sat quietly listening. No one could help smiling; but father said she was a sensible little woman, and mother saying it reminded her to look to the provisioning of the house, went away taking Mollie. Arthur asked if Kinsella could be called; he was an old soldier and had seen much service, and his ideas might be valuable. It turned out, however, that he could suggest little or nothing beyond what Arthur had thought of.

Everything inflammable was to be cleared away from the neighbourhood of the house. Every tub, cask, and vessel collected and filled with water, for fire was most of all to be dreaded.

Bushes and everything likely to give cover to the rebels must be sacrificed; and many

places barricaded and strengthened which had escaped father's notice, he being ignorant of military matters.

All the lower part of the house was to be closed, and windows strongly boarded up, and firing carried on from above. There were many other details which I need not enumerate, but Arthur had forgotten nothing, and stated everything so clearly and briefly that father said at last:

"Arthur, if you do not see a wise Providence in the accident that sent you back here, I can tell you I do; I am ashamed that you should have had to remind me of such obvious matters, which I had quite overlooked."

"You have had other things to think of," said Arthur. "And my old colonel always bade us consider the capabilities of every house, for attack and defence, so the matter is not fresh to me."

"All the same, sir, saving your honour's presence, Mr. Gordon has, in my poor opinion, forgot nothing it's convanient to remember for the confusion of these murthering spalpeens but just one point."

"What's that, Kinsella?"

"The horses, sor. What do you propose doing with them at all, at all?"

"What I'd do, Kinsella, is just turn all the lot loose in the park but Rollo and the Knight; for them I would litter down the laundry and bring them inside."

"Why those two in particular?" asked father.

"Because they are valuable enough to attract attention to the rest, and get them all stolen, for one reason, sir; and for another, may we not want a horse to get help?"

"Right again, Gordon. Now let us go to supper, and then we will to work at once."

"Aye, meat and mass hinders no man, your honour," remarked Kinsella. And as we all met at table uncle whispered to me:

"Niece Bride, I congratulate you. Your husband takes after his mother in looks, but he got his brains from his father."

CHAPTER XXII.

"The livelong night in Branksome rang,
The ceaseless sound of steel:
The cattle bell with backward clang
Sent forth the larum peal.
Was frequent heard the heavy jar,
Where massy stone, and iron bar,
Were piled on echoing keep and tower,
To whelm the foe with deadly shower."

Lizzie had heard of Larry more recently than we had, and told us at supper how at the taking of Enniscorthy he got separated from his corps, and though forced to retreat, he would not hurry himself, but just whistled, "The hare's in the corn," and made his horse curvet to the tune, though all down the street the bullets rained like hail around him.

"They say he's got a charmed life, like father Murphy, of Boulavogue, who just shows the boys a handful of bullets and swears they've rebounded off him," added Lizzie.

"God grant the boy be not too venturesome," said mother with trembling voice.

"And Heaven help those for whom he holds the candle," said Arthur laughing, which made mother smile as he intended, remembering this same cool hero's want of nerve on that occasion.

Supper was got through quickly and work began in good earnest. Arthur was allowed to direct for a while, on condition he would remain still; but after he had allotted all the labour among the available hands father quietly but decidedly bade him go to his room, answering his remonstrance by saying:

"Your own sense should teach you, my boy, how little strength you can really have yet; if you risk that unnecessarily, you may fail us at our greatest need. Rest while you may. You have set us work enough for hours."

I thought Arthur would object, but he rose promptly, saying:

"I obey you, sir. Good-night."

Uncle George, who was actually nailing up boards in a dainty fashion, nodded his head, remarking:

"You rise hourly in my estimation, young man. He who can obey is fit to command."

"Thank you, uncle," said Arthur. "Miss Walker, is it an Irish custom to fill a tub with a hole in the bottom?"

There was no hole; but Lizzie had to look all round, and was indignant at the trick played on her, and Arthur went off laughing; but he was thoroughly weary with the excitement of the evening, and confessed as I helped him he was thankful to go to bed; and was soon sleeping soundly, so soundly that he did not wake till late, when we had

all been astir and busy for hours. He was vexed with himself at first, but owned he was the better for the rest; and prudently forbore to exert himself when he got down, though inaction went sorely against the grain for his energetic nature.

He inspected everything that had been done, however, and was satisfied at last that nothing was forgotten. Father had sent for our clergyman, good old Mr. Harcourt, and for all or any of his tenants who chose to come. Some had gladly accepted the protection; but they were chiefly women, sick people, and children—helpless creatures who would be no aid to us, for indeed, most of the strong men were away on one side or the other. Norah and Pat were among the number, and altogether our fighting numbers consisted of about fifteen men.

Of these, four, including Keeran, knew nothing much of shooting. Uncle George had been a fine pistol-shot, but never a sportsman; so that reduced the garrison to father, Walter, Arthur, and Kinsella, all good shots, and ten men—two very old—who were known as good marksmen. Kathleen, Lizzie, Pat, and Norah could all load and fire well. I was little use enough, but could load or make bullets on a pinch. Mother could do neither; but her gentle, serene face, as she went about busy for the comfort of all, inspired every one with faith and courage. She was brave with

the true courage of perfect trust in God, which alone is ever unshaken. I must confess, for all they had thought me a heroine, I was a very coward at heart.

I had acted before on the spur of the moment, carried out of myself by excitement and anger; but as the sunny hours of this day passed I trembled at every distant sound, and could neither acquire mother's serene resignation nor Katie and Evie's light-hearted fearlessness, though indeed Evie clung more to Walter than ever, and was always at his side. Uncle George was dry and quaint in his talk, every one else much as usual; but Mr. Harcourt, he who had seemed so unnerved and tremulous of late, had regained almost the look of a young man in the presence of actual danger.

He carried himself erect, his grand old head with his beautiful white hair drooped no longer, and by his brave cheery words he did all good.

"Oh, Mr. Harcourt, if I could but feel like you and mother!" I said at last. "I am so afraid."

"My poor child," he said, "it is not in nature the young should feel it as easy to look on death as the old. If my few remaining days are suddenly shortened I shall only get back the sooner to my dear wife and the two little ones; but I can well understand, my dear, it's very different for yourself, with a

handsome young husband and all the world fresh to you."

He opened his Bible and read to me a little, and I felt better somehow, and went away to help mother, and chat a little to Bridget, the cook, who was very indignant at the idea of there being any interference with "his honour's glory," and threw out dark hints of vengeance on Sam O'Connor, who had dared to call her "an ugly old baste" in her hearing.

I think when everything was done that could be done, the reaction made us all feel rather flat; and though we laughed when Mollie said, "She thought the rebels had better come pretty soon now," it was not very much out from what others felt, especially the younger men; but the hot afternoon waned slowly and the sun went down, and we were still in peace, and all went and sat down on the hall steps as usual and ate cherries and talked.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The maids and matrons dropped the tear,
While ready warriors drew the spear.
From Branksome's towers the watchman's eye,
Dim wreaths of distant smoke can spy,
Which curling in the rising sun
Showed Southern ravage was begun."

EARLY next morning a crash of falling metal woke us suddenly. Arthur sprang up and was half dressed when Walter came to our door.

"Go back to bed again, my dear fellow," he said laughing. "Sure 'tis only Biddie and the big saucepan."

"What on earth is she doing?" asked Arthur.

"She has no mind to leave the black currants for those mane-souled Spillalogues, she says, so has been up with some of the girls picking them, and managed to upset all the pots in reaching down her biggest."

"Hang Bridget! I wish she would not startle one so. What is the time, Walter?"

"Not five o'clock! You can finish your sleep yet. I'm going to exercise Rollo," answered Walter's retreating voice.

"I wish I could go too," said Arthur, "but I suppose that's out of the question, so I may as well try for another sleep."

His attempt was successful, but I was less fortunate, and tired of lying still, rose, and dressed quietly, and went to help with the black currants.

Some time later Walter returned. "Arthur went back to bed, I hope?" he said.

"Yes, and he is asleep, I believe."

"Don't let him get up sooner than can be helped, Bride; make him lie still while he can."

"Why this morning especially?" I said, feeling my heart beat quicker.

"Because, child, God only knows what work is before us to-day. I have been up the Slievemoy Hill, and there I climbed the big tree, and far as I could see there was a mass of men moving in this direction."

Eveleen had come in and heard his last words. She said quietly, "Is it so, Walter? Shall I go to mother, or will you, Bride? she is in the hall."

"You go, dear," I said, "you are far braver than I."

Evie opened her great grey eyes wide.

"Why, Bride," she exclaimed, "you have proved your courage, and I am all untried so far."

"It's just because she has had such a trial that she dreads another, poor little woman," said Walter kindly. "Never fear, Bride, you and Larry show your spirit in queer ways, you know. Suppose you get some breakfast for

Gordon now, for we can't afford to let our commander-in-chief overdo himself, and he has more spirit than strength just now." He helped me to arrange the best of all that was at hand, and then taking up the tray, carried it for me.

"Walter, I'm ashamed of myself," said Arthur, who was just awake. "Is it as late as all that?"

"Not at all, my good fellow, but I want to talk to you a bit, and so I just brought you some rations."

Walter detailed what he had seen, and Arthur listened till he had done, then asked abruptly several questions about the country, distance, and other matters.

"I give them three hours from now," he said coolly. "Well, as Mollie says, they may as well come pretty soon, fighting's better than waiting. I'll be down in ten minutes, Walter."

"That's just what I wish to prevent," returned Walter. "Remember, Arthur, you are the man to whom we look and you must command."

"Kinsella is an older soldier than I."

"Aye, maybe, but he is a bit rusty, as he says himself; and if you direct me, I'll see to anything below with him."

"I suppose I had better give in," said Arthur, "for I must confess I'm not the man I was before your countrymen tried how tough my skin might be."

"Well, seeing it's only the other day almost Keeran concluded Miss Bride had just brought your corpse home to be waked, you have picked up pretty well since; but now let's to business," answered Walter laughing.

Arthur gave his orders about arranging guns, ammunition, &c., concisely, and added:

"In two hours from now I shall be down to see what you have done. There is no chance of another force coming from the East?"

"No, I must have seen it."

"All right, I shall be punctual."

Arthur was down to the moment; having inspected all the preparations for defence, he went straight to Bridget, who was still busy with her jam.

"Now, Bridget, I want all your pewter ware, plates, mugs, anything."

"God bless my sowl, Mr. Gordon, what next?" cried the astonished Bridget.

"Let's have them first, Bridget, then I'll see what next. They're just to run into bullets if we get short."

"Well, if it's for making a thrifle of a hole in Misther Sam's ugly carcase, sure it's not meself will object," muttered the unforgiving Bridget, collecting the articles named. "Where will I take them, sor?"

"Into the master's dressing-room, Bridget, and just light a fire in there like a sweet creature as you are."

"Ah, sure, I'll do anything you wish, sor. 'Tis your honour has always the pleasant tongue in your head," returned Bridget with a broad grin on her very plain face.

The hall was barricaded up as strongly as possible, as was all the lower part of the house, so it was almost in darkness.

The helpless women and children were put into our old nurseries, which were thickly walled and lighted by skylights, so it was improbable that even stray bullets should reach them. All the rest were disposed in various rooms. On the first floor, where holes had been cut in the shutters for the muskets, and mattresses arranged as barricades, the upper part of the shutters was open, as bullets passing through would, from the angle they took, fall spent and harmless.

Before the final division, father asked Mr. Harcourt to say a short prayer. In old days he had been a very strong opposer of the Roman Catholics, but in the time of danger we see things in another light, and he addressed us with only a few fervent words suitable to all his hearers of both creeds and then gave us the blessing, and we all dispersed quietly. Father, Walter, and uncle occupied two windows of a large room, and Arthur had reserved for himself the third window, which looked out in another angle, and would probably be the most exposed. Between the windows, safely sheltered, were

Eveleen, Kathleen, Lizzie, and I, ready to load or pass up guns, of which we had plenty.

Kinsella and the other men were commanding the other side of the house, with Pat, Norah, and some young lads to load.

Mollie had been given a baby to nurse to keep her among the women and was proud and happy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"We've guns enough, we've men enough,
Our hearts are stout and true;
We will burn the city down,
But we'll never yield to you.
We can do, and we can dare,
But we'll never live to fling
Our brave old gates wide open
To you traitors to the king."

THE minutes seemed long as hours, and we girls were chatting in low tones, when there was a rush as of horses galloping.

"'Tis only the loose horses in the park," said father, looking out of his peep-hole.

"It's more than that, sir," said Arthur quietly, though his dark eyes were glowing with excitement. "Listen! I also hear a sound of men marching."

"Hold your whisht!" cried Lizzie. "Aye, aye, Gordon, I hear it too now."

We all heard it in another minute; the men drew a long breath, and looked to their muskets.

"Here they come!" said Arthur. "Lizzie, will you like to look for the poor fellow you disappointed? Is that him, on a black nag now, with fiery red hair?"

Lizzie could not resist looking, and said:

"Yes, that's Flanagan, and there's Sam. What have they got in those cars?"

"Feather beds," said father. "What is that for Arthur, barricades?"

"Aye, and a clever notion too; they will stop our bullets, sir."

The rebel force was now within speaking distance, a body of perhaps a hundred men.

Flanagan, who seemed in command, tied a white handkerchief on his sword, and rode up nearer.

"What a truculent-looking scoundrel," ejaculated uncle. "Lizzie, my dear, you had an escape. Whisht now, he is going to speak."

Flanagan, a great powerful, thickset man of middle height, with coarse features much scarred by smallpox, shouted for Mr. Kavanagh.

"Here I am," answered father, opening a piece of his shutter. "What may you want?"

Garnishing his address with foul language and many oaths, the man stated if we did not at once surrender, the house should be burnt about us, and no quarter given to man, woman, or child, and further he demanded that Lizzie Walker should be delivered up forthwith.

Father answered briefly that he would defend his house to the last, that he had plenty of ammunition, and was in every way prepared for resistance, and added:

"And you may tell Sam O'Connor that he may do his worst to those from whom he

has received many a welcome and many a kindness."

Flanagan was turning to go back, when Arthur called to him sharply.

"And just tell Sam that I, Arthur Gordon, say that my wife shall never fall into his hands alive, if I shoot her myself!"

He fastened the shutter without waiting to see the effect of his words, and looked down on me with a loving smile.

"There, my poor child, now you know your fate."

"Keep your word, Arthur," I answered, for death, I knew, would be the best alternative.

There was no delay on the part of the enemy now; they attacked the house savagely on our side.

We ladies could, however, see and understand little or nothing. The muskets were passed down to us silently and regularly to be reloaded, and we returned them as quickly as possible, and in a few minutes even my unaccustomed fingers managed the work easily, the noise of the firing so close to us and choking smell of the gunpowder annoyed us at first, but we heeded it little after awhile.

Sometimes one or other of the gentlemen would make a remark such as, "Well aimed, Walter; he'll want no more." "Uncle, can you account for that big fellow with a torch there?" and so on; and once I heard Arthur

say to himself, "Confound that coward Sam, why will he keep out of range?"

But they were too intent on their work to say much, and with compressed lips and resolute expression they fired; and we loaded, gathering from the few remarks that passed that, as usual, the enemy wished to fire the house if possible.

Presently there was a pause.

"What is the next move?" asked father. "Can you see, Gordon?"

"Holding council, I think. Ah, Kinsella has got a turn at last."

"On the whole," remarked uncle, "I am of opinion it is easier to slay rebels than woodcocks."

"Let me look out, father," said Kathie. "We know nothing down here, except that you make a great noise, and sometimes their bullets come through over our heads."

"Do you want to see too, Bride?" asked Arthur wiping his musket carefully.

Lizzie and I peeped out for a minute at the men, who were standing in a group round O'Connor, who was still on his horse. Lizzie looked on coolly enough, but the sight of the dead and wounded made me shudder, for it seemed awful, though it was right, for the men we loved best to be taking the lives of their fellow-creatures thus coolly and deliberately.

Mother came in at the moment with food and

wine, which was welcome enough, for the heat was great, and every one more or less weary.

Arthur went off with father to see how Kinsella was getting on. He had been less fortunate, for already one of his men was wounded, but not seriously; otherwise he announced he was equal to double the number of the villains.

"I believe they will try and drive in the front door next," remarked Arthur, "and it's the weak point, for one can't get a handy place to aim at them."

"And you would not have musket-holes drilled in it?" said father.

"No, sir, and I maintain it's right. They could get their guns in as well as we could get them out, and drop in the burning pitch too."

"The door is good oak, and iron plated," said Walter.

"They'll try to drive it in with a sledge under cover of feather beds. Hallo! what's the matter now?"

For a shrill scream was heard from some of the maids. Walter ran out, and came back to announce the stables were in flames.

"Oh, that's no great matter," said father.

"But, Frank," said mother, "remember the wooden cowsheds between them and the house."

"All gone, my dear, thanks to Arthur's foresight; we pulled them down last night; there is no danger."

Mother drew a sigh of relief, and Evie said:

"Fancy if the Knight were there, Kathie."

"Don't talk of it, it would be worse than losing one's sweetheart."

"Wait till you've got one to lose, my dear niece," said uncle drily.

Arthur, who was watching out of a window, drew in his head quickly, and a ball whizzed close to his face. Lizzie gave a little cry.

"All right, Lizzie, my beauty is still unspoiled; such as it is, you know. These fellows aim well, though."

"They get a good deal of practice on wild geese," said uncle with a mischievous twinkle.

"Is that personal, sir?" said Arthur laughing. "Walter, come on, lad; I am anxious about that door. Mr. Kavanagh, your two guns will do here just now: there is no movement here. You can come, Eveleen, if you can't trust me with your precious spouse."

Evie and I followed them, passing the rooms where Kinsella was keeping up brisk fire, and making for father's dressing-room, where Arthur had ordered a fire to be lit.

A fragrant smell greeted us, and opening the door what should we find but Bridget calmly seated, stirring away at her jam as if nothing unusual was going on. No one could help laughing.

"Ah, Bridget, you're a jewel of a woman,"

cried Arthur. "You deserve a special medal for valour."

"Sure, yer honour, 'tis a mortal sin to be wasting the good fruit, and the fire burning away so convanient too."

So Bridget stirred away while Walter and Arthur consulted, looking out rather anxiously.

"Is there no place on the roof would command it, Walter?"

"Not safely, you'd be picked off like a crow off an elm."

"Oh, I'd chance that," said Arthur. "But I can't see that one could get a good post; and this window is so straight above it; if they have sense to keep close to the wall we are done."

"They must get in range a bit to use any force. How about fire?"

"If they break in, we must just defend the staircase as best we can; the old wood in the hall will burn like tinder, though."

"Ah, they're at it!" as a dull thud resounded from the door.

Arthur leant right out and discharged his musket down, but uselessly.

"I'll try the next room," cried Walter disappearing.

"Let me thry my hand, sor," said Biddy suddenly, and before Arthur could speak she raised her enormous preserving pan and discharged its boiling contents right on the

faces of the men below with excellent aim, calling out.

"Take that, Misther Sam O'Connor, for calling me an ugly ould baste."

A yell of pain from below testified to the efficacy of Bridget's defence.

Regardless of danger we all leant out, and saw half the party below were rolling on the ground, evidently severely scalded.

"Sure, 'tis a terrible waste of good jam," remarked Bridget coolly, as we congratulated her on her brilliant idea.

"There's no more jam, but boiling water might answer," remarked Walter.

"The sight of Bridget and the big pot will scare an army, I should say," laughed Arthur. "Oh, 'twas splendid, though; I'll not forget it to my dying day; if ever I get back to the regiment won't our old colonel enjoy it? I say, Walter, could we knock a hole in that wall, think you?"

"Up there? Sure, I don't see why not. It will be one of the little rooms; the grape room, I suppose."

"We can interfere with their little game nicely from there. Bridget, just boil the pot again, my dear woman, and give them another dose."

"Deed and I will, sor," responded Bridget, cheerfully, and we went up to the so-called grape room, which had acquired its name from having a vine on its paper.

Fetching a pick-axe, Walter began to work vigorously; Arthur could only direct, but luckily it was not one of the very thick walls, and a breach was made sooner than could have been anticipated. Eveleen and I cleared away the rubbish as it fell, and soon the hole was large enough for the two to see out enough to direct their fire.

"They can see us pretty plainly, Walter; look out for yourself," remarked Arthur. "This is not like loopholes in a shutter."

Walter was taking aim as he spoke; a man fell to his shot, and Arthur dragged him back, but not in time; a ball just touched his shoulder and the blood spurted.

"It's nothing," he said, "only a scratch."

"Thanks to Arthur," cried Evie gratefully, as she tried to bind it.

"Hurrah for Bridget," exclaimed Arthur, who was inspecting the proceedings outside. "The woman's worth her weight in gold; such a shower she's given them. Here, Eveleen, begging your pardon, you're tying that too slack. Bride dear, get us some more bullets."

I went as he desired, and returning found Walter's arm sufficiently well to allow of his using his musket again. The rebels were gathering round the door, but summoning two or three more of our force, they were at length driven from that particular spot with considerable loss on their part.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Before her eyes one vision,
And in her heart one cry,
That said, 'Go forth, save Bregenz,
And then if need be die!'
She loosed the strong fleet charger
That fed from out her hand,
She mounted and she turned his head
Towards her native land."

THERE was a wonderful sameness for many hours; from point to point we were attacked, and so far had succeeded in repulsing them with no loss on our side and only a few flesh wounds, and these chiefly among Kinsella's force, though father had a narrow escape, the ball actually cutting away the skin on his temple.

Mr. Harcourt had been about with mother, and was now assisting to load the guns for a while.

Kathleen and Lizzie were busy casting bullets, with little Pat to help, and wee Mollie nursing her doll and watching them, not half understanding what it was all about, I suspect.

It was very close and hot, and Arthur passed his handkerchief across his hot forehead wearily, as I took the discharged gun and gave him the other.

"Get me some wine, Bride," he said, "and

give the rest some too; we can't afford to break down."

Kathie entered as he spoke.

"Father, we have run all the pewter into bullets, what next?"

"Collect old nails and anything of the sort, Kathleen," said Arthur; "we may be thankful for them yet. Well, Kinsella, what news?"

"Bad enough, sor! there's a fresh lot of them come up, and the big keg of powder's running low."

"Already, Kinsella?" exclaimed father.

"I'll go and see, sir, what is left," said Arthur hastily.

He returned with a grave face.

"Kinsella is only too right. Where did you buy that powder?"

"In Wexford."

"You were cheated, sir, the keg has a false bottom; it's not half full nearly, and the small one is just as bad, or worse; instead of powder enough for a couple of days, it will not serve us till night."

Father was not much of a swearing man, but a bitter oath escaped his lips then, as he looked at us helpless women.

"Who sold it you, Brother Frank?" asked uncle.

"Tim O'Rafferty," said father shortly.

"Ah!" cried Lizzie, "as bitter a man as ever stepped against the Protestants; he hoped to serve you some such ill turn."

"Tim, that is the one with the cast in his eye I'm thinking," remarked Kinsella. "I'm mighty content, then, to think he is desthroyed half an hour since."

"Satisfactory, but scarcely of practical use unless you could turn him to powder," said uncle.

"Father, I know what must be done," said Kathleen firmly, "let me ride for help."

"You, my child? impossible."

"Why impossible?" asked Kathie gravely. "You know that I can ride as well or better than any one here, but Walter, or yourself, or Arthur."

"That's thrue for ye, jewel," muttered Kinsella.

"Not one of you could be spared, even if Arthur could keep his saddle."

Father gave a mute assent; his face was working with pain; it was easy to see a terrible struggle was going on in his mind. Kathleen went on in the same calm voice (the emergency seemed to have made a woman of her instead of a thoughtless gay child).

"I am not afraid, but once away the Knight will hold his own; not another horse can com near him for speed, can they, Kinsella?"

"Ah, miss darlint," burst out Kinsella, "I'll ride, dear, sure I'm pretty fair across country yet."

"Arthur, what do you say?" said Kathleen, suddenly turning to him.

"I would rather you did not ask me," he answered turning back to the window.

"That means you agree," she said triumphantly.

Arthur held his tongue and fired his gun off.

"Gordon, we have been under your orders, hitherto, and have every reason to trust you," said father with an effort, while great tears rolled down his cheeks; "the matter is too near my heart for me to be a fair judge, you shall decide it."

Arthur stood silent, but I saw his hands tremble as they had not done when death seemed inevitable, then he exclaimed impetuously:

"By heaven, sir, I will not! I cannot! it is too much to ask."

Old Mr. Harcourt, who had been listening, now raised his white head.

"Young man," he said, "Mr. Kavanagh has a right to ask for at least your opinion. Your knowledge of such matters is more than that of others here. Do all present agree?"

There was an assenting murmur and then Arthur said bitterly:

"If you force me to such a point I have no choice left. In my opinion Kathleen is the only one here who can ride for help. No other woman rides like her, and it is madness to spare a man. But if harm happens to the child don't blame me, nor say it was at my wish she went. I would as soon fight to the last ounce

of powder, and then we'd sell our lives as dearly as possible and be done with it."

Arthur's voice nearly failed and he turned away again suddenly; one great sob shook father's chest, then he said firmly:

"Kathleen, my brave girl, you shall go. I have no right to sacrifice the lives of all for the sake of one. Go at once, and may God protect you."

"Amen!" said Mr. Harcourt solemnly.

Lizzie Walker had not been present during the discussion, but entering gathered what was taking place and cried eagerly:

"Mr. Kavanagh, Mr. Kavanagh, I am the one to go; you know I ride well, and who cares if I am killed? while Kathie is every one's darling."

I think father was tempted for a moment, then he said:

"Lizzie, I thank you with all my heart, but it shall never be said I risked your life where I did not dare send my own child. Say no more, it is settled."

Lizzie would have spoken, but uncle, who till now had been silent, said in a low tone:

"My dear, don't think we undervalue your offer, but Kathleen knows both horse and country better than you, so her risk is less. Not another word, Lizzie, it is only adding to her father's pain, and for pity's sake some of you girls keep poor Mary from knowing it till she is gone."

"I'll go," said Eveleen, "mother is upstairs."

Kathie was gone to dress, Walter and Kinsella to saddle the Knight; Arthur still remained like a statue at his post, silent, and I did not dare to speak to him, hardly understanding his mood.

Outside there was a cessation of hostilities for the moment.

Father had hidden his face in his hands for a minute or two, but rising he came to Arthur, saying almost in a tone of supplication:

"Gordon, will you not go and see to Kathleen's start? all depends on it."

Without turning Arthur answered in a constrained hard voice, "I am at your service, sir."

"Nay, I will not compel you to anything, if you do not wish it," said father sadly.

"Wish it!" said Arthur in the same unnatural voice. "Much my wishes have been consulted, when you all forced me to give the casting vote in a matter of life or death, or worse for the child. If those devils get her, her blood will be on my head for life."

Father stood silent, I looked beseechingly to uncle, but old Mr. Harcourt came forward once more, and said earnestly:

"Mr. Gordon, your feelings carry you too far in this matter. Your opinion turned the scale doubtless; but it is by her father's consent she goes; and, sir, I firmly believe not a hair of the child's head will be hurt, for

God will protect her in thus bravely doing her duty."

He paused, but Arthur remained still mute, and Mr. Harcourt went on:

"Mr. Gordon, if anything is left undone which your military skill might suggest for Kathleen's safety, then indeed her blood will be on your head if you neglect the chance still left you of doing your best for her: and remember, sir, your wife's life is at stake as well as all the others."

Without speaking, Arthur laid down his gun, and left the room hastily, only making a sign to me to follow. I heard uncle say kindly, "Poor boy!" as I ran after my husband. Arthur held me close for a moment, saying:

"Don't think me quite a brute, child; come, we must waste no time."

And we ran down hastily to the laundry, where Walter and Kinsella were saddling the bay colt by candle-light, and Kathie stood by in her habit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I know a maiden fair to see;
Take care!
She can both false and friendly be;
Beware! beware!
Trust her not, she is fooling thee."

"HERE you are at last, I thought you would not desert me, Arthur," said Kathleen pleasantly. "Does not the colt look lovely?"

The pretty creature pushed its soft muzzle against her caressingly, as if it knew of the coming trial.

Arthur had recovered his composure, and was criticizing each strap and buckle carefully.

"Here's a faulty one, Walter; best change it."

"Right you are, Arthur, and a fresh girth, Kinsella."

"Have you food and wine, Kathleen?" said Arthur. "No? Bride, run for my little flask, fill it with the best wine, and bring the leather saddle pocket too. It's very small, Katie, it will not be in your way."

"You have a better head than any of us," said Walter, "I had forgotten the provisions."

I went for the things, and met Norah, who had been too busy before to come near us.

"Is it true Miss Kathie is going for the soldiers?" she asked.

"Quite true, Norah."

"Ah, I'll come, then; maybe 'tis meself could be of use to her."

I did not see what Norah could do, but I did not gainsay her, and she followed me.

To the food and wine, a strong knife was added, in case of the Knight picking up a stone, and a pistol, by Kathleen's own wish.

The laundry opened into the great yard, which was surrounded by such high walls, the rebels had hitherto left it unassailed.

In it were some old stone buildings, used for cart-horse stables, and various farm purposes; but as Sam well knew, the laundry was the only one with direct access to the house, and that only approached by a narrow passage and staircase, for the present offices were at the back of the house, and the yard was on one side, and was used a good deal to lunge young horses in.

There were very large heavy doors at the farther end, and a small door near the house, not large enough for horse and rider to go through. In old times when Ballydorough was a castle, the dependents of the family had lived in little huts within the walls of the yard, hence its large area.

The rebels had posted some men to guard the great door, otherwise this side the house was deserted.

"How best shall Kathleen make her start?" asked Walter, who was evidently exceedingly nervous.

"Shure, Masther Walther, I'll just dhraw the boys away from the big door with a promise of mate and whiskey at the small one," said Norah.

"Can you, Norah? If you could, it would be everything."

"Sure, 'tis aisy enough to talk the poor saft craturs over," answered Norah scornfully, "they'll belave I'm one of them, I'll just get the whiskey, sir."

"Which way will you be going, Miss Kathie dear, when you are out?"

"Right across the park, Norah, and over the pailing. The king's men are lying out at Ballyforneen, at least they were there three days since."

"Would it not be safer to stale away by the plantations, darlint?" said Norah anxiously. "Sure that mane-spirited fox, Misther Sam, might fire on ye as ye ride by."

"There are men in the woods," said Arthur, "and if they have fastened the lodge gates, no horse can leap them. Your plan is the best, Kathie. Spur the Knight and make a sudden dash; it will startle them so they will have no time to fire till you're out of range."

"Can we do nothing to draw them off for a moment while she passes?" said Walter, who was evidently far less confident than Kathie

herself, she looked as bright and brave as possible.

"They are out of house-range pretty much, getting a rest, and serving out food," said Arthur. "I don't know but that idiot Sam might be taken in by a trick. I'll try a false alarm. Kinsella, go and bid the master bring every man and boy, aye and Biddie, and the big pot, down to the far door, the servants' hall side. Get the barricades away, the door unlocked, and wait for me. Walter, mind you must shut the doors quick; don't stay looking after Kathleen, lest they run in and overpower you, but draw bolts and join us. We might have to make a sortie in earnest if they shoot her horse. Remember, I can aim straight, but for a scrimmage I'm no more good than a girl, worse luck. Now, Norah."

Norah stepped out, and as she neared the door began to sing softly "The wearing of the green." Then we heard her call out:

"Whisht now, boys. Tell me is Pether Corish among ye?"

There was a murmuring of voices outside, and presently in a louder key the answer came.

"Maybe he is not far off. And who's asking for him?"

"Norah Clary, that's engaged to his cousin Tom. Ah, Pether dear, can ye tell me where that poor lad is now? Sorra a know I know myself about him."

We could not hear the reply, but a short conversation passed, in which it was clear Norah was making the most of her powers of fascination. She had ever been a village coquette and beauty, and had had many admirers besides Tom Corish.

"Shure she's coshering them and soothering them," said Kinsella, who had returned. "Ah, by the powers, the women makes fools of us all."

Norah left the great door as he spoke, and crossed to the little one, which she unlocked, leaving the strong chain up, so that it only opened a few inches. She was passing the bread and meat through, and then we heard her say audibly:

"Bad luck to the whiskey jar, 'tis too big. Wait, boys, till I get a horn."

"Undo the chain," cried the men.

"Shure I can't, 'tis screwed up. Wait now; I'll run like a hare."

Norah flew across the yard to us.

"Now's your time, Miss Kathie, honey. Oh, God and the saints bless ye, and keep ye, darling.'

Norah was nearly sobbing, but Arthur said shortly:

"My good girl, stop that. Miss Kathie wants all her courage. They'll hear the horse's tread. Wait a minute."

He caught up some tow that lay in a corner, and muffled the Knight's hoofs.

"Back you run, Norah, with the horn. Walter, go over and undo the big door Show your handkerchief when Kathie can follow. Stop, though dear; you must mount her, I cannot. Kathleen, good-bye. I must go. Make a rush when you hear shots. Bride, watch for Walter's signal."

Kathleen stooped from her saddle and kissed him.

"Good-bye, Arthur. I should never feel half so brave but for your coolness."

I doubt if Arthur's coolness held out then, for I think he dashed away the tears as he ran down the long passage; but Walter gave the sign. With a last pressure of the hand Kathie was gone, and I ran as fast as I could to the upper floor to try and get a sight of what would follow.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Out, out into the danger,
Faster, and still more fast
The smooth grass flies behind her,
The chestnut wood is past.
She looks up; clouds are heavy;
Why is her steed so slow?
Scarcely the wind behind them
Can match them as they go."

As I flew along Lizzie and Eveleen ran out of a room and called to me, and as I could not stay to speak, ran after me till we reached a window above the door where the *sortie* was just being made, with great noise of firing and shouting and clashing of metal.

As Arthur hoped, the noise at once attracted the attention of the rebels. Flanagan and O'Connor sprang up and called out orders to their men, who tumbled over each other in their haste, and in the height of the confusion.

Kathleen dashed by, the Knight going grandly, his magnificent stride clearing the ground at wonderful speed, and she sitting well back, her violet eyes flashing and her lovely fearless face all glowing, as she urged the horse with voice and hand.

Guessing the ruse put on him, with a foul oath Sam turned and fired right at her face, but missed her.

"The cowardly baste," cried Lizzie, almost beside herself with passion. "Oh, if I were a man."

Sam O'Connor and Flanagan had sprung on their horses which were standing near, but just as Sam started in pursuit, Arthur dashed out almost up to the rebels, dropped on one knee, and fired.

His shot took effect, for Sam's horse, a fine hunter, staggered and fell heavily, throwing Sam sideways, and pinning him down in its struggles.

Arthur retreated, a few balls whistling round him harmlessly.

"I envy you that shot, Arthur!" we heard father exclaim.

"That? It should have been man, not horse; but my hand's unsteady," he answered scornfully.

Flanagan was away after Kathie, but his horse, though strong, was slow, and though he fired his pistols once or twice it only increased the Knight's speed, and we had the great relief of seeing her clear the palings easily, and hearing her horse's wild rush slacken to a steady gallop till the sound died away, and presently Flanagan returned hot and angry, and swore at his men for not disabling her horse or making a rush in and overpowering the inmates of the house when there was so good a chance.

Sam was evidently something the worse for

his fall, but not very seriously, for he could walk, though lame, so no bones were broken.

His poor horse was still struggling, but some one mercifully put an end to its pain with a pistol shot, and as he stood by I heard him cursing Arthur bitterly.

The others heard him too, as they returned to their old posts.

"You are quits now, Gordon, for the fall the yellow colt gave you," said father, smiling.

"Aye, I think before all is done I shall repay Sam all I owe him," returned Arthur, shortly.

"Shure, and I wish they would make their minds up outside," said Walter, yawning. "What will they be at, think you, Gordon?"

"How can I tell what such idiots will do?" returned Arthur. "If they'd a grain of sense one could guess; as it is, I suppose I had better go the rounds and see."

"Are you fit for it, Nephew Gordon?" asked uncle kindly.

"As fit for that as anything else," Arthur answered wearily. "I'd rather see for myself. Bride, will you come? I may want a messenger."

We went from room to room, but were fairly puzzled with the movements of the rebels, though it was pretty clear they were doing nothing much. At last we came to mother's room; Arthur hesitated a moment.

"Bride, I had a thousand times rather face their pikes than your mother; I dread what she'll say about Kathleen. I know I deserve it; but I can get no other good view of the ruin. We must go in."

He would have knocked, but hearing his voice, mother came to the door and opened it.

"Do you want me?" she said in her usual gentle tones, and though her eyes showed traces of much weeping, her face was calm and serene as a star.

"May I just look from your window, Mrs. Kavanagh?" Arthur asked in a hesitating manner very unlike his usual clear, soldierly fashion.

"Not if you call me Mrs. Kavanagh," mother said with a smile. "My dear, how worn out you look."

He had gone to the window as mother spoke, and the light falling on his face from the half-open shutter, showed how white he was, and what heavy shadows were under his eyes.

"Is it impossible for you to rest awhile, Arthur?"

"Presently, perhaps," he answered.

"Bride, my dear, go and get your husband some hunters' cordial," said mother.

I ran off to the store-room for the beverage mother named, which was a combination of eggs, milk, old Madeira spice and other things,

supposed to be a sovereign remedy where men had been over-long fasting or in the saddle; we had a special recipe for it, thought the best in the barony.

It took but a few minutes to rise and froth, and as I reached mother's door I heard Arthur say:

"I cannot shake off the responsibility, mother; if death or worse befal her, I am guilty; had I held my tongue she would be safe here now."

"Put aside all dread of worse than death for Kathleen Kavanagh," mother answered proudly, "she has a pistol and for the rest she might be safer here for the moment. But how long will the powder last? And then——"

"And then—God give us a quick death and easy," Arthur replied quietly.

"Amen," said mother reverently.

Their words brought home to me the danger I had never realized, and hot as the day was I felt icy cold as I entered and gave Arthur what I had brought; he drank it, and said with a smile it was good to put heart into a man, and now he should go on the roof, if I would show him where to get out. So we went away up to the garrets, and Arthur seemed to have recovered his spirits wonderfully for his talk with mother, but I felt almost sick with dread and could hardly speak.

Arthur got out on the roof bidding me

wait, and I heard him walking on the tiles; presently there was a musket fired below, another or two and a heavy fall, then silence above, the vague fear for the future was forgotten in the present dread, and climbing the ladder, I put my head out of the trap-door and called Arthur; to my intense relief he answered at once in a whisper:

"I'm all right, dear; but there are such confoundedly good marksmen below, I had to drop into the valley of the roof here, and must lie still a minute; if they think I'm dead they'll get careless, and I'll get back to you."

And in a few minutes he came back crawling flat on his face, very dirty from his scramble but quite unhurt, and rather triumphant.

"It was a near thing, though, Bride," he said laughing. "The fellow cut the lapel of my coat, so I thought I had best drop off the ridge."

"What are they doing?"

"Just nothing at all. Flanagan must be as great a fool as Sam himself, and that's saying a good deal. They must know what Kathie rode for, and yet they waste time thus."

We went down again to the lower floor and met Walter.

"I began to think something had come to you, Gordon; shure, my good fellow, have you been chimney-sweeping for a diversion?"

"That's the pot calling the kettle black,"

said I; "you're an inch thick in powder, Walter."

"Just a patch or two to set off my 'illigant' complexion, Mrs. Gordon. Now your man is nothing better than a nigger. What is going on, Arthur?"

"Not a thing at present, anywhere."

"Oh, this is really getting deadly dull; we have not had a shot since you left, and uncle's beginning to recite Shakespeare."

"I think I shall have a rest," Arthur said; "I'm dead beat."

"You look it," said Walter; "admire yourself in the glass first, though," and he went off laughing.

"You are very tired, darling," I said when, after getting rid of the soot, Arthur threw himself down with a sigh of exhaustion.

"Aye, I am so, dear, and the worst is I can't see sometimes, I'm so done; but a rest will put me right. Bride, child, do you know this may be our last quiet half-hour together?"

"Oh, Arthur, don't! Don't!" I cried trembling. "We must be saved."

"My poor little sweetheart," he said tenderly, drawing me down till my head lay on his breast; as I knelt by him he stroked my hair, but only whispered a few fond words, and did not answer me.

I felt I must know the worst, and said:

"Arthur, what will happen to us?"

"My little woman, Heaven knows what line those fools outside may take, they have thrown away such chances already. Our powder can last but a short time, I suppose they will break in."

"And then——"

"And then—we are in God's hands, my darling."

"But what do you expect?" I persisted. "Do tell me; don't keep anything from me."

"I should conclude they will attack us hand to hand, and we shall be driven back by inches from their superior numbers. In position we have an advantage," Arthur answered deliberately, as if reviewing the matter mentally. "If they fire the house it will be sooner over, it will burn easily, for all we have drenched it so below."

I raised my head from its resting-place, and looked up to the window where a glimpse of blue sky could be seen with the swallows glancing across it. The pigeons were cooing softly from the roof, now and then a few petals drifted in from the white roses, and the room was sweet with the honeysuckle and jasmine perfume. I tried hard to think the summer sounds and scents the reality, and the dread future a dream, but I could not, and hid my face again, striving hard to be brave, while Arthur lavished caresses on me silently.

At last I whispered:

"Surely Kathie will get help."

"She may," Arthur answered. "But even if she reaches the camp they may not be able to spare men, or they may come too late."

He spoke very quietly as if he had little hope and after a pause added:

"Of one thing there is little doubt: if it comes to a trial of strength I shall have no chance. Oh, if I could but use my sword fairly."

"Take me with you," I said, "I must die too; don't leave me to O'Connor."

"Trust me, my own," he said, sealing his promise on my lips.

"Will it hurt much?" I whispered, half ashamed of my question.

Arthur's lip quivered as he replied:

"Sweetheart, why torture yourself and me too? Do not let us remember anything but that we have this half-hour to ourselves, let the next bring what it may."

"I wish you had stayed in England," I said sadly, as I looked at his handsome face and tall lithe form, in all the pride of youth and manhood, and thought how soon it might be defaced and laid low.

"Do you not yet know how I love you, dear?" he replied tenderly. "The short time you have been all my own is worth an eternity of life without you."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Young Redmond soiled with smoke and blood,
Cheering his mates with heart and hand
Still to make good their desperate stand,.
'Up, comrades, up! in Rokeby Halls
Ne'er be it said our courage falls.'"

No word of the future passed between us again; gradually I regained my courage such as it was. All too soon a shot sounded on the still air.

Arthur sprang up at once.

"There's my signal," he said. "I must go, it comes from Kinsella's side. One more kiss, dear; you are coming with me, are you not?"

We went to Kinsella and found him on the alert, brisk and fresh, but alone.

"Shure I tould the boys to lie down as you bid me, sor, while they could, and I hope your honour has been doing the same. 'Twas obliging of Misther Sam to give us a chance."

"It was," replied Arthur, "for I was beginning to think we wanted a rest; they have paid us a long visit, Kinsella."

"Aye, sor, they have, an it's mortial hard on you to be on your feet all day, and yourself must be as wake as a colleen still."

"I'm all fit for work again now, Kinsella. What has been done out there?"

"Why, Masther Sam and Flanagan have

had the biggest row, sor, that iver you saw," said Kinsella, his keen eyes twinkling. "Shure they nearly came to blows. Flanagan swore he'd have murthered ivery mother's son of us hours since, if Sam had had as much sinse as would dhrown a kitten, and Misther Sam called him iverything but a good man."

"Well, what came of it all?"

"Why, sor, they jist drew off in two parties; some of the boys favoured one, some the other, and they would not so much as swear at each other, and I'd great hopes they'd just fall to on each other; but worse luck, ye see, sor, there's something in both their heads besides the fightin'."

Kinsella looked first at Arthur then at myself in a queer, knowing way, and reading in our faces that we understood his allusion he went on:

"Shure and Flanagan's dead set on Miss Lizzie, and you've crossed Misther Sam, sor, and it's he has the black dhrop in him, and swears to be revenged; he just walks up and down and piles on the curses on you, sor, as thick as sand on the shore; he hates you as bad as the ould sarpint did St. Pathrick."

Arthur could not help laughing at this simile, but went on to say:

"They are coming on again now; just the old thing, Kinsella; call your men."

"Yis, sor, any other orders?" said the old man, drawing himself up and saluting.

"Load light; aim straight, and remember the powder's short."

"Come, Bride, dear."

We went back to the old place and the attack began once more on both sides of the house at once; presently Walter staggered back and would have fallen but father caught him; Lizzie Walker took his gun without a word, and filled his place almost unnoticed. Arthur looked round and said:

"Mr. Harcourt, I daren't leave this unguarded, but I know something of gun-shot wounds; will you come here?"

Mr. Harcourt, who was loading, relieved him in a moment, saying:

"Never fear, Mr. Gordon; I was trained for a soldier before I took orders. I will keep your place."

Arthur was at Walter's side at once, putting Eveleen gently aside as she knelt by him in an agony of fear.

"Ah, it's all right, Evie," he said in a minute. "He's stunned by a spent shot probably."

"Go back to your post, Mr. Kavanagh; here's the mark."

As he spoke Walter opened his eyes, and put his hand to his head in a dazed way.

"Ah, you see stars?" said Arthur; "no wonder. Here's what hit him, Eveleen: a bullet splintered the shutter, and the iron bar fell and caught him on the head. Lucky it's

a pretty thick one, Walter," he added, seeing Walter could understand him.

"Thank God it's no worse," said Eveleen. "What will I do for him?"

"Pour some cold water on his forehead, and let him lie there a bit. Bravo, Lizzie; can you keep that window?"

"I'll shoot straight, never fear," answered Lizzie abruptly.

"Yes, but do you mind? Pat could come," said Arthur, "it's not women's work."

"Mind! can't you be done with your compliments even now, Gordon?" she retorted. "Let Flanagan come in reach, and I'll show him what woman's work is."

Arthur held his peace and resumed his place; but I think he was glad when Walter, declaring himself recovered, relieved Lizzie of his gun once more, and she went back to her old task of loading, though even there she drove home powder and bullets as if her very soul was in the task.

Oh, it was a weary afternoon, the groans of the wounded outside, the stifling smell of the smoke and powder inside, and worst of all, the feeling that every charge we rammed down brought us nearer the terrible moment when there would be no more powder.

Hardly a word passed now, the men aimed and fired with a mechanical regularity in silence. I could hardly see the others for the smoke, but Arthur's face was stern and un-

flinching, though his very lips were white with fatigue, and only the angry light in his eyes showed what strong feeling was at work.

At last he rose suddenly.

"Mr. Harcourt, will you come in my place?"

Mr. Harcourt was ready, but Lizzie stepped before him.

"Let me," she said, "I'll go mad if I don't do something."

"You shall not," said Arthur, more sternly than I had ever heard him speak, giving his gun to Mr. Harcourt.

"Why not?" she cried, her eyes gleaming with a wild light.

"Because for the moment it is unnecessary, and you shall not stain your hands with bloodshed if I can help it. Come, Lizzie, I'll give you work fit for a woman; I want help."

His unusual manner cowed her, and she said no more. He went on to father:

"Mr. Kavanagh, Pat will take your gun. We must barricade the gallery. Come and move mattresses."

"Is it come to that, Gordon?" said father sadly.

"Not yet, sir; but it can't be long now."

The mattresses were moved from other places, and arranged to line the balustrades of the gallery.

Lizzie worked with a good will and the strength of a man.

Presently I heard her whisper, "Gordon, I can thank you now. "I was nothing at all better than a murderer, then, at heart."

"You're not the only one that has felt so to-day," Arthur answered quietly. "When there's no help I'll give you a gun; till then, Tracy would probably rather you let it alone; but you are fit for a soldier's wife, Lizzie."

She smiled but very sadly, and sure, if it was hard for Eveleen and I, it was worse for her. At least we should die with the men we loved best, and there would be nothing to stay for if they were gone out of the world; but poor Lizzie would have to leave her lover without so much as a last kiss, and tread the unknown path all alone, and maybe, he would forget her and choose another after a while, for the men are so sometimes; and, to be sure, as they grow older they want wives to mind their houses and see to things a bit.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"We're in for a gallop, away, away.
I told them my beauty could fly,
And we'll lead them a dance
Ere they catch us to-day,
For we mean it, my horse and I."

KATHLEEN did not realize at first that Flanagan could not clear the palings; but as the Knight steadied down from his first wild dash to a steady gallop, she looked back and saw she was alone.

Too good a rider to press her horse unnecessarily, she checked him till he went at a speed he could easily keep up for hours; yet with his long stride they covered the ground fast, and she but half saw the fair country as she rode on by cornfields where the green ears waved in the soft wind, neglected hayfields gay with tall weeds, hedges covered with pink and white dog roses, and rough wastes where the furze filled the air with its sweet scent.

Her mind was intent on gaining help for Ballydorough, and she had but a general idea of the road she must traverse to reach the camp. The ground began to rise a little and she made for the highest point from which she could get a somewhat more extended view.

Far away at the rebel camp the green flags fluttered on the breeze, but nearer she could see no sign of danger, and started off again at speed. Here and there a few women and children might be seen near the cottages, the former looking anxious and talking together with lowered voices; but there were very rarely any men working in the fields or on the roads, and when Kathie once or twice paused to ask where the soldiers were lying she could get no information.

At last a knowing little gossoon with a shock head of carroty hair, and as little else to cover him as well might be, answered her question in the negative with so comical a face that Kathie guessed he was lying. "What might your name be?" said she.

"It might be Pat, but it is not," he answered grinning.

"And this shilling might be yours, but it won't be," said Kathie, showing him one, "because you're telling me lies about the soldiers when you know well where they are."

"Ah! miss, darlint, shure and shure, they're away there at Bally Peasty."

"That's not true," said Kathleen gathering up her reins.

Seeing her on the move the boy came close to her and whispered:

"Miss, dear, the king's men are at Carno-

lin; they moved yesterday and there's been a fight, and that's thrue for ye, by the Vargin and St. Bridget; but ye'll be kilt before you can reach there if you go by the borreen."

"Which way will I go? Right over there—over the fields?"

"Aye," said the boy, clutching her money and climbing the nearest tree to watch her, as she put the Knight at the fence. The route indicated was across a fair hunting country, the fences easy, and the grass sound; and the Knight, feeling the turf under his feet, neighed for very pleasure, and raced along joyously.

Presently Kathleen saw a number of men in the lane she had been warned to leave; they were too far off to harm her though they could see her, and were evidently curious, but none tried to follow. As the boy had kept faith with her so far, she trusted the rest of his information might prove true also.

The easy hedges ended at last in a rough, high stone wall which no horse could jump; it stretched away far as eye could see, and evidently bounded a road which must be crossed.

There was a broken gate easily opened, and Kathie galloped up the lane hoping to find another; to her dismay she found she had quitted the fields too soon. Right before her some more men were lying in the road.

Turning her horse, she was heading for the gate, when she saw that another detachment was in her rear, and would reach the gate as soon as she did.

Kathleen's blood was up, and she determined to make one bold effort for her liberty.

Snatching her pistol from the saddle pocket she cocked it, and seating herself firmly in her saddle, she spurred her horse and rushed him straight on the rebels. They had sprung up, and were trying to bar her way with crossed pikes; but with a magnificent spring the Knight rose high in the air, resolved like his mistress to do or die in the attempt. He cleared the obstacle, and as he touched the ground the men snatched at the reins and Kathie's habit; but she fired both barrels of her pistols at them, and one who had nearly dragged her off fell back; whether killed or not she knew not, for the Knight flew on, and recovering her seat she urged him till they reached another gate, and she was on the grass once more, and stopped to reload her pistol.

The men she had broken through were but a handful, and all unmounted; but now, as she drew rein for a moment, she heard the sound of horsemen behind her in the road she had just left.

In another minute they were through the gate and in the same field.

Two men and a woman, the latter in a

green habit, and riding a powerful flea-bitten grey. Kathie recognized her at a glance as Loo Walker, and woman-like, the sight of her old friend raised Kathleen's spirit to the utmost. Fail she might, die she might, but Loo should never see her show the white feather. Rivals they had been in many a hunting field; it should go hard with Kathleen, but she would win her race for liberty, if not life, and setting her teeth hard, away she went over the grass, steadying the Knight as they reached the hedge, for the sound of the hoofs behind was maddening him; but Kathie's small hands were strong as steel, and he cleared the jump faultlessly, though it was a bad take off, and landed neatly in a field of uncut hay. Kathie hesitated a second, then resolved to skirt it, for the grass was long and tangled. One of the men tried by riding boldly across to cut her off, but there was a soft bad bit of ground, and he could not save time, for his horse was heavy and floundered in it; still he had gained a few yards and there was less distance between them as they raced over the next field.

Kathleen had to decide which way to go, for she had outridden her accurate knowledge of the country, though she knew she had hunted over this part before luckily; the few next fields were sound and the stone walls low, and safer than the hedges, which, tangled with the glory of their summer blossom and

leaf, were dangerous and deceptive as to width.

Splendid horse as the Knight was, there was a chestnut mare behind him almost as fleet, and her rider was sparing nothing to overtake Kathleen; still the chestnut was not gaining much, though the pursuers had the advantage of not having to decide for themselves where to jump, but could follow in Kathleen's track, and even so trifling an advantage counted in their favour.

Still she held on bravely, the "fighting blood" of the Kavanaghs surging in her veins, and the soft wind whistling in her ears till she could hardly hear for its sound; the midsummer sun beat down fiercely on her, but she felt no heat in her excitement.

They were going up a steepish hill at last, and Loo was pressing up somewhat imprudently. At risk of being within pistol range, Kathleen resolved to slacken her pace and spare her horse. They mistook her action, and fancied the Knight was blown, and urged on their animals to the utmost; they were so much nearer now that Kathie could distinguish the men's features, and guessed one to be Loo's husband whom Lizzie had described, the other was an older man, and with a shudder Kathleen felt he might be one of the Murphys, the ex-priests, who were proverbially ruthless. They shouted to her to stop or they would fire; but she rode

quietly on, determining want of nerve should not tempt her to over-press her horse. Many an old hunting lesson of father's came back to her, and even the sharp hiss of a pistol bullet did not change her resolution.

The result showed her wisdom. Cresting the hill was a tolerably flat brow, with a most formidable set of rails, the gate far up, many a long yard from her nearest point—a terrible jump for even the best horse—but Kathleen determined to try.

"You won't fail me, darling, will you?" she whispered, stroking the Knight's satiny neck. "We'll die; but we won't be beaten, my beauty—now."

As if he understood her, the Knight arched his grand crest, and with a neigh went for the fence.

And though one hoof just touched he landed his mistress safely. Behind her she heard a tremendous clatter, and then the dead thud that in the hunting field is known too well.

Looking back she saw that Loo's husband had rashly put his horse at the fence, and out of wind with its up-hill gallop, it had caught its feet on the top bar, and fallen headlong over, horse and rider lying in a confused mass.

Something in the outstretched neck of the poor beast told Kathleen it would never rise again, and even in her danger she felt a regret

for the gallant creature thus sacrificed to man's cruel passions.

Loo's heart had failed her, and with a sense of triumph Kathie saw she was making for the gate, and gloried in her old rival's discomfiture, as she had done when in childish days gone by they had ridden side by side, and her pony had cleared the ditch by a foot more than Loo's could accomplish.

For a true woman minds little how a man outshines her, but cannot bear another woman to get the best of her in anything, and Loo was probably as bitter as Kathie was proud just then.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Onward they drive in dreadful race,
Pursuers and pursued."

One more of Kathleen's enemies remained, and as she went on she strained back to see his fate. There was not long to wait; in another minute the chesnut mare was high in air, and though she rattled every hoof she had sharply, and nearly fell, her rider's nerve and skill just saved them on the landing, and with a thrill Kathie recognized that her work was not done, and the most formidable of her foes was still in pursuit. Then, as she turned to see where the Knight was going, far away her eye was caught by something white, and with unutterable relief she realized it was undoubtedly the soldiers' tents, and her goal was in sight, though many miles might yet lie between her and it.

It was a question of speed and skill now. Never had Kathleen's seat been firmer, her hand more steady and delicate, for the man behind her rode as well as herself; his mare was as fast if she had not as much stay as the Knight, and a trifling mistake of judgment might turn the scale irrecoverably.

So far Kathleen believed she had acted

wisely, but her utter fearlessness carried her beyond prudence and she put the colt at a place in a hedge where a mass of meadow-sweet and other flowers disguised the bad ground, and for the first time that day the Knight refused it utterly.

Well it was for Kathie then that she and her horse had been dear friends from his early days, when as a long-legged rough-coated foal, she had played with him for hours—for now she trusted too much to him to think he had failed her for want of heart, and relying on his judgment chose a better place; they cleared it successfully, but those few minutes gave her enemy a great advantage, and even Kathie's dauntless spirit trembled to see how much nearer the chestnut's long lean head had crept up the Knight's flank.

Providentially the man made no attempt to fire; either his pistols were unloaded, or the excitement of the wild ride had got into his veins too, and he thirsted to conquer the slight fearless creature as men pursue a deer or hare. Every sense of personal fear which she might well have felt was getting lost in the delirious excitement of the pace she was going at, though in her foe's cruel face she could now read how little chance she had if once his hand was on her rein.

A false step, a moment's check would be fatal now.

Nearer and nearer the tents showed out

against the green of the trees; a bugle call rang clearly on the air, and Kathie could see glimpses of scarlet where the soldiers were grouped together.

So fast they rode on that the soft west wind seemed to cut her delicate skin like a lash; but still the Knight could not shake off the mare, and her long outstretched neck seemed to Kathleen nearer than it had been five minutes ago.

The camp was fairly in sight now, on the summit of the next green slope; but between Kathie and her haven of safety rose a terrible obstacle—in sporting parlance, a bullfinch—a great thorny high fence such as must be cleared flying, or there was little hope both horse and rider would survive the inevitable crash.

The Knight had done so much that day, it hardly seemed possible he should have strength for this crowning effort.

The green turf seemed to fly beneath his great stride, as, extended to the full, he raced along; but his rider could detect his chest was labouring slightly, sure sign he was beginning to feel, if ever so little, the exertion he had gone through.

And if the Knight failed her, near as she was to the camp, Kathleen knew her hour was come.

For doubtless her pursuer was well aware of the importance of her errand and would

deem her death a light matter if he could not stop her otherwise, and she nerved herself, determined, if need be, to die rather than yield.

The great thorny barrier was still some way from them when, putting his foot in a hole, the Knight stumbled heavily; his rider's light weight enabled him to recover himself by a marvellous effort, considering the pace he was going at, but the minute thus lost brought the mare alongside; her head was even with the Knight's shoulder and her rider made a savage, ineffectual snatch at Kathie's reins; though he failed, the Knight swerved slightly, changed his foot, and Kathleen with sinking heart felt it was almost impossible he could clear such a leap with this disadvantage and the enemy pressing him out of the direct course.

Spurring the chestnut till in desperation she made a frantic effort, the rebel was riding neck and neck with Kathie; with her whip between her teeth she fired at him, but missed, and he seized the Knight's bridle with an iron grip. Like a wild thing at bay, Kathleen, dropping her pistol, lashed him across the eyes with her whip. Swearing at the pain he grasped her slight waist, but before he could drag her from the saddle, from the other side the fence a horse rose high in air and in an instant was beside them, and a blow from the rider's loaded stick crashed down on the wrist that held Kathie; it dropped helpless, and

she was free to range up to her deliverer's side and face her foe.

With an evil light in his cruel eyes he glared at them both for a moment, then turning the mare, he dashed in his spurs till the blood spurted and flew back across the field.

The man who had so opportunely come to Kathleen's rescue seemed about to start in pursuit, but a glance at her changed his mind; with a long regretful sigh he said:

"I am unarmed, so if I follow that brute the general will be angry," and then turning courteously to Kathie, he asked anxiously if she were hurt and how he could serve her. And now she could recover herself and observe him. She saw he was young and unusually good-looking, with a face that would have been effeminate in its delicate refinement and fairness only that the soft, sleepy blue eyes could flash up with sudden fire; and under the gentle almost caressing manner was something that gave the idea of hot temperament and fiery spirit lying dormant. He was bareheaded, and his silky golden hair curled bright and soft as a child's over his white forehead; his richly-laced uniform was all unfastened and he apologized, saying he had caught sight of her as he was changing his coat after work, and had not dismissed his horse fortunately, for therefore he was able to ride at the fence without delay.

Kathleen explained her mission, and the young officer said he would escort her at once to plead her cause with the general, adding doubtfully, he trusted such a messenger could not be refused. Failure had been so far from Kathleen's thoughts that in despair she implored him piteously to help her, and looking into her lovely beseeching face, what could be expected but that he promised everything, and vowed that could he but gain leave he, Cecil Geraldyn, would do and dare all that man could to save her dear ones; and though it took but a few minutes to find a gate and ride to camp, by that time Mr. Geraldyn was more strongly in earnest about our rescue than he had ever been about anything in all his previous life.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Welcome to Stirling's tower, fair maid;
Come ye to seek a champion, said?
Does thy high quest a knight require?
Or may the venture suit a squire?"

Arriving at the tents Mr. Geraldyn sprang off and assisted Kathleen, then gave the horses to the charge of his servant with orders to take special care of the Knight, who was receiving his mistress's caresses as if he felt that he deserved them, as a reward for having done his best for her.

Without heeding the many wondering faces around, Mr. Geraldyn with uncovered head led Kathleen to his tent, and begged her to honour him by waiting there while he went to seek the general.

Glad of a minute to arrange her disordered hair, and recover herself after the wild race she had ridden, Kathleen accepted his courtesy, but looking out of the tent a minute after, caught sight of Major Tracy, and impulsive as usual, sprang up and ran to him with outstretched hands; he was walking slowly like a man in a dream, and at her sudden appearance stopped literally speechless with surprise, hardly believing his eyes, while she impetuously poured out her tale, ending with:

"Ah, do, do help me, for Lizzie's sake, Major Tracy; she is there, too."

"Lizzie!" he said, "at Ballydorough? Where is her husband?"

"Husband, sure she has not one; what do you mean, at all, at all?" cried Kathie.

"I heard she was certainly married to Flanagan; her brother sent me a message it was so."

"And you believed the lie?" exclaimed Kathie. "Oh dear!—oh dear! Sure there's not a pin to choose among you men. Did not you bid Bride tell her to trust you whatever chanced? and at the very first word said you believe anything about her. I thought better of you, Major Tracy."

Tracy's face lit up with a sudden joy.

"Oh, Miss Kavanagh, I have been a fool, an idiot, and you are an angel!"

At which point Mr. Geraldyn came back and looked astonished and no way delighted to hear his grave senior thus fervently addressing Kathie.

Little cared she what any man thought. Ballydorough's peril lay too near her heart.

She followed Mr. Geraldyn through the camp, utterly unconscious of the admiration and surprise with which men looked on her, and realizing nothing of the envy many felt for Mr. Geraldyn's luck in seizing the opportunity of riding to her relief.

Major Tracy's excitement almost equalled

her own, and the trio entered a tent where sat as if in council several older men, who rising greeted Kathleen with grave courtesy, and begged her to be seated.

Briefly and in glowing words she told her errand and begged for immediate help, and then looking up at the fine, stern face of the general in command, read intuitively with a glance that he was going to answer in the negative; in icily polite tones he replied:

"My dear young lady, I deeply regret the unfortunate plight of your family; but it is the fortune of war, and the odds are in their favour. You say the house is strongly barricaded; who commands the garrison—your father?"

"No, my brother-in-law, Mr. Arthur Gordon."

"Arthur Gordon, of the ——th?" said a short, quick, middle-aged colonel. "Why, general, the man is a tower of strength in himself—as smart a fellow as ever stepped, and a splendid swordsman; he could finish fifty of these rapparees to his own blade."

The tide was setting against Kathie; she burst out eagerly:

"Sure and he bid me say they'd fight to the last drop of blood, but the powder was nearly gone."

"Then they can take to their swords," said the general curtly.

"And Arthur just off a sick bed, and with

a dozen wounds on him, hardly healed; 'twas all he could do to hold his musket all the day. Ah, if Dr. Somers were but here he would tell you better than I."

"Fetch Dr. Somers," said the general to Mr. Geraldyn, "he is not far off."

And Kathie saw glances exchanged among the seniors, and heard a whisper ending in, "Duelling no doubt; there's wild blood in the Gordons."

Hot with anger, Kathleen cried:

"Sir, you have no right to say it; Arthur was desthroyed because he would not join the rebels to save his life, and he was not out before breakfast at all, at all."

A smile curled the general's lips as he said kindly:

"My dear child, I meant no disparagement to Mr. Gordon; we all know him to be a brave officer and gentleman."

Dr. Somers entered at the moment, and to him Kathie turned eagerly, begging him to confirm her words.

"About Mr. Gordon?" he said, "my late patient, Miss Kavanagh? Surely he cannot be out of his bed yet; how many days is it since his life hung on the turn of a minute?"

"Did I not say so?" Kathie said triumphantly. "Ah, sir; do—do listen to me now, and give me some men. Oh, if the fox-hunters were but here, Lord Mohurry would not have kept me waiting thus."

Kathleen little knew how hard it was to spare any one, for there had been a considerable loss the day before; they were to push on to attack Wexford on the morrow, and the foxhunters were not up, being, it was supposed, still in pursuit of fugitives.

Kindhearted and fatherly was the general, with girls of his own at home, but he was sorely perplexed then.

Kathleen was not to be repulsed, with visions of all she loved best being murdered; she would wring consent to her prayer somehow, and when her words at last failed her she threw herself on her knees at their feet, her great violet eyes overflowing with tears, her lovely face alternately flushing and turning pale as, hope or despair predominating, she turned from one to the other and tried to read their faces.

No man could resist such an appeal, and at length the general raised her with a kindly hand saying:

"You shall have help at any cost. Now to see who best can be spared."

"Let me go, sir," cried Tracy eagerly.

"You, Major Tracy?" said another, who was his colonel, looking surprised.

"For God's sake, sir, grant me a moment aside," said Major Tracy, while Mr. Geraldyn volunteered also, so warmly that a half-smile rose on the general's face, as he glanced at Kathleen with a shrewd guess that his aide-de-

camp was under the spell of her beauty, which even made an impression on his own veteran heart, so he could judge how it would affect a young ardent man.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"There was saddling and mounting in haste,
There was pricking o'er moor and lea;
He that was last at the trysting place
Was but lightly held of his gay ladye."

If the general had been slow in decision he was prompt in action. Bidding Kathleen come with him, he ordered wine and food; stood over while she ate and drank, speaking to her in the kindest way and telling her she was just the age of his youngest girl, and he would be proud if his Mildred was as brave; then he offered her another horse, but Kathie went to see the Knight, and found him fit to carry her back, and quite refreshed by a good rub down and a light feed, and in less than ten minutes she was mounted on him once more, and he was tossing his head and champing his bit, and curveting on the sward, as if his day's work had been a mere canter in the paddock.

They had started but a few minutes when they saw three horsemen galloping after them, and to Kathie's delight she recognized Larry with Mr. Power and little Bill Neville.

The foxhunters had just got into camp as Kathleen quitted it, and extorting a hasty

consent from their chief, these three had started, only waiting to get fresh horses, though they had had a hard day's fight, and a march since.

If Kathie were charmed to see Laurence, Cecil Geraldyn was by no means so delighted; up to that moment he had monopolized all Kathleen's attention, for Major Tracy rode on in dead silence with a wild eager light burning in his eyes, and his keen sunburnt face lined as with pain, so his junior had it all his own way and could look into Kathie's sweet eyes at will, but her ecstasy at her brother's arrival showed him how unconscious she was of his admiration, for she was too utterly transparent and childlike to disguise her feelings, so Cecil fell back a little sulkily, and let Laurence ride by her, and hear all she had to tell, feeling it was his due, as he was so nearly concerned in the matter—though it went more sorely still against the grain, when fat Mr. Power pressed up on the other side, his honest face all beaming with delight at meeting Kathie even thus, and little Neville, finding no chance of getting near her, began to bestow some of his raptures on Geraldyn himself, with whom he had long been acquainted.

Bill Neville was not a very observant youth, but at last even he could not fail to notice how short his friend's answers were, and began to pester him with questions as to whether he disliked his errand, or was ill, which taxed

Cecil Geraldyn's rapidly diminishing stock of patience to the utmost.

However, just then Larry checked his horse, and falling in by Geraldyn thanked him warmly for the rescue of Kathleen from her enemy's clutch. Geraldyn and Larry had not met before; but few ever resisted Larry's frank manner, and his strong likeness to Kathleen was possibly not without its attractions.

Geraldyn's moodiness vanished like snow in sunshine, and responding pleasantly to Larry, sympathized with him on the bad news Kathie had brought.

Larry's open face saddened as he replied:

"God grant we'll be in time. Tracy is in command, and he will push on as fast as man can."

"What's his stake in it?" asked Geraldyn.

Larry explained shortly, and Kathie called him and asked if he would not share the wine and provisions Arthur's forethought had stocked her saddle pocket with, as Mr. Power said they had ridden from camp without a mouthful. Fortunately it was a pretty ample supply, and the three foxhunters declared themselves grateful, for they had been long without eating, and Larry had a slight sword cut across his forehead, though he called it a mere scratch.

And while he and his comrades ate and drank, Cecil Geraldyn found his way back beside Kathleen, and made the best use of his

time that the pace would allow of; for they were going as hard as prudence would permit, though not quite at the speed Kathie had ridden at earlier.

Even as they galloped along somehow the bright blue eyes that softened as they met her own, began to exercise a strange power over Kathleen's wilful, defiant childish heart, and instead of sending away Cecil Geraldyn with a careless jest to make room for Larry, she let him ride at her side, while Major Tracy, with his silent expression of pain, kept on her left.

At first Larry felt slightly aggrieved and astonished at his pet sister thus forgetting him, but, with a shrug of his shoulders he resigned himself, muttering:

"The old story, as I'm a sinner. Sure, it's a queer time for courting, anyway," and indulged in some silent laughter at the discomfited countenances of Mr. Power and young Neville, who could by no means take the situation so calmly as Larry did, their feelings being somewhat warmer than his fraternal ones; but whatever they thought, there was nothing to be done, for Cecil Geraldyn, if he was young in years, was by training a man of the world, and by no means inclined to cede the advantage he had obtained in the matter of position; and probably the consciousness that he had two aggrieved rivals behind him by no means detracted from his enjoyment.

"Where did you know Geraldyn?" Larry asked young Neville at last.

"At Dublin, when we were there; he was at all the balls. He was A.D.C. at the Castle; he's Lord Geraldyn's eldest son," said Bill ruefully. "Kathleen seems to fancy him?"

"She's showing her gratitude," answered Larry shortly; "it's not every day a man saves a girl's life."

"I wish I'd had his chance," said Mr. Power, in melancholy tones.

Larry could not suppress a laugh at the idea of the portly figure of Kathie's woebegone swain clearing the fence, as Geraldyn had done, and seeing Kathleen beckon to him rode up to her.

"Larry, boy, there's the fence up there that I left Loo's husband at, and I think I can see the horse now."

Larry stood up in his stirrups and pronounced her right.

"I'll ask leave to go and reconnoitre," he said, and dropping his voice, added, "Kathleen, Tracy's bewitched, I think; you're best judge of the shortest road."

"We've been all right so far; Major Tracy, you must bear away to the left a little now, please."

Major Tracy started, but gave the necessary order clearly and sharply, asked Kathie a question or two and relapsed into his reverie; only assenting mechanically to

Larry's request to ride off to where the dead horse lay.

"Loo's carried off her man somehow," said Larry, rejoining his troop at the gate. "But sure it rattled his bones, I'm thinking, for here's his boot; the horse broke its neck." Larry exhibited a riding boot cut to pieces, evidently to get it off an injured limb.

Geraldyn's sleepy blue eyes flashed eagerly.

"The man that wore that can't be far off, Mr. Kavanagh."

"But if he is, I'd not go a yard out of my way to destroy him," responded Larry coolly; "we have too much in hand for that, I'm thinking."

And falling back by Neville's side they rode on silently, for Bill was too much vexed to talk, and Larry, for all his nonchalance, was terribly anxious and was turning all the chances over in his mind for and against the probability of being in time.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"I, with two more to help me.
Will keep the foe in play;
In yon straight path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
And keep the bridge with me?"

THE barricading of the gallery was soon done. Norah, Lizzie, Bridget, and I worked together at throwing water over the stairs and saturating all we could reach below in the hall.

As we came upstairs again father whispered something to Arthur which I did not catch, but he replied instantly aloud:

"Sir, let every man do as he will with his own. My wife and I are resolved, are we not, sweetheart?" and drawing me to him he put his arm round me.

"But the rest, Gordon, you forget them?"

"The lot upstairs are as well there as anywhere, I suppose; they can leave the back way if they choose to risk it."

"I'm thinking, sor, I'll just boil the pot again," remarked Bridget.

"You're a jewel, Bridget, just wash their faces once more or so if you can," Arthur answered laughing. "The girls and Pat can load again, Mr. Kavanagh."

"Load, Arthur, what with?" said father surprised.

"Oh, I have a small reserve for close quarters; I have saved back some powder, but it's but a trifle."

"Would it not be best to keep the rebels outside to the last moment?" asked father.

Arthur turned sharply; till then he had leant languidly against a wall, but his face lit up suddenly with a flash of intense passion as he replied:

"I swear, sir, till I am past praying for, I will do all I know to revenge myself on Sam O'Connor for this day's work, and with a pistol I can be dangerous yet. Curses be on the ill-luck that prevents me from using a sword properly."

Father rarely argued with a man whose blood was up; he said it was useless, and only wrought harm. Arthur cooled down in a moment, and began sorting some pistols, interrupting himself to say:

"Bride, let's get our last rations now, and like a good girl brew all you can of the hunter's cordial. Perhaps that knock on the head has weakened Walter a bit, and Kinsella's men have lost blood."

With Eveleen and Lizzie's help we soon served provisions to those that would eat. Arthur drank down as much as he could of the hunter's drink, and made us women drink it too, saying we should want all our courage soon;

then he took some to Walter, who was still at his window.

"Come, Walter, do your duty," said Arthur cheerily, "take your rations, man. Ah, your appetite is the worse for the shutterbar, is it? Now, Eveleen, just use your wifely authority; he's got to drink this; perhaps he will eat after."

"Set him an example," said Eveleen kindly; "you live without food, Arthur, I believe, and I made this spiced beef with my own hands, so I shall be offended if you do not try it."

Arthur shook his head with a slight shudder, saying lightly:

"I'm past it, I'm afraid, Eveleen, though if anything would tempt me it would be to know you were the maker."

"You're not past your civilities at least, Gordon," said Lizzie.

"I did not know you were so near, Miss Walker, or I would have forborne to annoy you. Come now, will you take Walter's place and watch, and let him eat and rest?"

Lizzie was very willing, and Walter after drinking the cordial managed to make a fair meal.

I went up to the women and children, who were under mother's care; they seemed resigned and fairly still, though now and then one would burst into noisy weeping, and set off others.

Mother said she would remain with them; some one must, for at the sound of the indoor

fighting they might become uncontrollably alarmed, and rush down into danger. I offered to stay also, but in my heart I dreaded having to do so: it seemed so awful to be shut up, knowing nothing; mother smiled sadly, but kissed me, saying:

"My darling, go back to Arthur, and abide by his orders; I have Mollie."

Mollie was wonderfully still and good; she had her kitten and a baby in charge and bade me not wake them; so I went back. Up till now we had returned the rebels' fire, though as scantily as might be to save powder. But just as I got back again, Arthur came on the gallery, and his voice rang out, clear and firm "Cease all firing, men, and come to me here."

He was obeyed promptly, and as they all came each one received his orders as to where he was to kneel or stand; then to each was given a pistol and his share of ammunition; the swords and every other weapon the house could afford were arranged ready to hand.

Arthur was trying the temper of the blades critically.

Uncle walked up to him and remarked:

"Master Arthur, I was considered a pretty fellow with a light rapier in my youth, if you have such a thing."

"Not much of a one, sir, I am afraid; we don't shine much in cutlery; choose for yourself. Here, Kinsella, you and I will take these two swords, and keep the stair-head."

It was so obviously the place of danger, being unprotected by any shelter, that every one looked up at Arthur.

Uncle was the first to speak.

"Nephew Gordon," he said slowly, "discretion is the better part of valour. I am doubting neither your skill nor your courage in questioning the wisdom of that decision, but there are stronger than you here to-day."

"Are you in command here or I, sir?" Arthur answered shortly; "Kinsella, which sword suits you best?"

"Whichever your honour plases," said the old man cheerily; "shure, I'm proud to stand by ye."

Uncle had been taking a deliberate pinch of snuff. He now remarked, "My young commander, you have not assigned me a place at which to become food for powder."

Arthur turned with a smile. "I had not forgotten you, sir; is your hand steady? I dare not risk doubtful shooting with powder so short."

"Questionable, I should say," uncle remarked calmly, holding out his white hand on which a beautiful diamond glistened; "the weight of that barbarous musket has strained it a little."

"You must help load, then, sir, and chance the rest when the *mêlée* comes."

"Have you any objection to my sharing with

you and Kinsella?" said uncle. Arthur looked considerably astonished and glanced at uncle as he stood looking so thoroughly spruce and dapper, in spite of the long hard day, with his delicate ruffles and well-arranged dress all unsoiled. Uncle, seeing his hesitation, said coolly, "Try a pass, if you doubt my qualifications."

They crossed blades once or twice, and Arthur lowered his with a laugh.

"You have underrated yourself, sir; you're a past master of fence, but why need you expose yourself?"

"May I not have a pistol, Gordon?" said Lizzie, coming up.

"I have saved you one," he answered quietly, "you may be glad of it in the end."

Their eyes met, and I could see she read the hidden meaning in his words, for she held out her hand to him, saying:

"You are a good fellow, Arthur Gordon; you forget none of us."

Arthur turned to me last, and drew me aside.

"Sweetheart," he whispered, "we agreed how my last shot should be used, but I had not counted on having to keep the stair. I may be shot down, too soon."

"Must you do it?" I whispered back clinging to him "you warned uncle."

"Would I put a man where I dare not go myself, and I the best swordsman here?" he

said, his eyes flashing proudly. "Child, skill may do something, and Sam is a clumsy fool. Walter and your father are unfailing with the trigger, but their fencing is of the simplest; all I care for is for your fate, Bride."

I caught a momentary fire from his brave smile.

"Give me a pistol too," I cried, "I will find courage."

"That's my brave darling," he said.

And as he gave me a pistol he added:

"Remember, Bride, you may yet be saved, or Sam cut down soon; you must trust your own judgment, even if I am past advising you—this is only a last resource, rather than fall into O'Connor's hands."

There had been a long lull outside. Evidently the attacking force suspected a ruse, from the sudden cessation of firing from within.

"The cautious fools," Arthur said; "Sam is too choice of his ugly carcase to risk it."

"Maybe he is of opinion he will never get a better," said uncle drily; "I am quite content that they should remain outside."

There was a dead silence for a few minutes; the ticking of clocks, and even watches, seemed painfully distinct.

Arthur sat down, and leant his head on a mattress, looking so white, that I watched anxiously, thinking him faint.

It was but the extreme of weariness; he

was on his feet again, as a heavy blow on the front door startled us all.

"They won't get it down for a few minutes," said father. "Ah, Biddie is successful once more."

For a cry outside, mingled with a woman's scolding voice, told that Bridget had again made an attack with scalding water, and that some one had suffered more or less.

Another violent thud on the door made my heart beat painfully. Then, after a few more blows, came a crashing sound, as the strong oak was torn from its massive hinges.

A more distant noise told some other part was being similarly attempted.

"There goes the side door," said Walter; "they'll be in first that way, now."

Arthur, who was leaning over, drew back suddenly, exclaiming:

"Steady, men. There goes the door! Down girls, for your lives."

And as he gave the order, with a thundering noise the massive door fell in completely. Several men dashed in and paused, the semi-darkness to which our eyes were accustomed puzzling them.

The momentary hesitation cost the lives of two, father and Walter fired, and the nearest fell dead.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"A shot is heard. Again the flame
Flashed thick and fast. A volley came!
Then echoed wildly from within
Of shout and scream the mingled din,
And weapon clash and maddening cry
Of those who kill and those who die!
As filled the Hall with sulphurous smoke,
More red, more dark the death flash broke,
And forms were on the lattice cast,
That struck or struggled as they past."

One or two turned as if to fly, but with wild yells a mass came pouring through the door, some discharging their muskets wildly, for though the balls whizzed up far above us none came very near.

Some made a rush at Arthur and Kinsella and lunged madly at them; but superior skill told, for they fell back wounded and unarmed from the attempt.

Uncle, who shared the post of honour and danger, was as cool and deliberate as usual. I heard him say once:

"Why don't you thrust, Gordon, instead of parrying?"

And Arthur's reply was audible:

"I'm waiting, sir; I can trust my strength. I might lose my sword."

But in the main it was a scene of wild, mad confusion, what with the smoke from the

firing, the gloom of the darkened hall, and the yells and shouts of the attacking party.

I was utterly bewildered, and thankful I had not to load, for which service there were plenty of helpers, so I had only to cower down in a corner behind the barricade, and watch my darling, too frightened almost even to pray for him.

A few attempts had been made to set fire to the hall, but the things were so thoroughly soaked with water, they did not succeed, and, angry at the failure and at the manner the mere handful of men who composed the garrison were holding their own, a more desperate attempt was made to carry the great staircase.

A number of men rushed up at once, and suddenly I distinguished Sam O'Connor, and saw he had singled out Arthur and was attacking him furiously.

Arthur stood on the defensive, his tall figure drawn up to its full height, his dark eyes flashing scornfully, as Sam shouted out every abusive epithet he could think of, and flew at Arthur like a tiger; but his skill was not on a level with his hatred, and Arthur had some slight advantage in position, so he kept his enemy off wonderfully, and preserved a scornful silence, which irritated Sam more than words.

"Curses on you!" he shouted. "When I've crushed your pretty smooth face under my

boot-heel, Arthur Gordon, Bride will be mine," and then the rest of his speech was not fit to record. Even my fear turned to passionate indignation, and I could see Arthur's eyes blaze like hot coals in just wrath, as with a desperate lunge he went under Sam's guard and the blood ran down O'Connor's side. I suppose the wound was not serious, for Arthur had but time to recover his sword before Sam was thrusting at him once more ; but his mad efforts seemed ineffectual against Arthur's defence, and anger seemed to give Arthur back strength for the moment, and so the encounter was fairly equal.

A step or two below Kinsella was fighting like a lion, backed deftly by uncle, and ever and anon one of the crowd would fall back riddled by a pistol shot, and in the fall knock down others.

All at once I saw a man crawl under uncle's blade unperceived in the fight, and writhing up catch Arthur round the knees, throwing him back on the stairs with a heavy crash.

In an instant Sam was at his throat like a bull dog. Taken at such terrible disadvantage, Arthur was at his mercy, for O'Connor was enormously powerful, and had Arthur been at his full strength would have been a dangerous adversary ; and now, weak as he was, he had no more chance than a child in that cruel grasp.

O'Connor's hands were on his throat like a vice, and with a fiendish exultation he was raising Arthur's head to dash it on the stair. Snatching up my pistol I rushed to his rescue, but more efficient aid was before me.

Bridget had just arrived on the scene with a red-hot poker in her hand, and seeing Sam O'Connor made at him without a moment's hesitation.

Her weapon was irresistibly formidable. As the hot iron seared his face, Sam's grasp relaxed, and pursuing her advantage, Bridget belaboured him on every vulnerable point, till he actually retreated, when Walter fired at him simultaneously with Arthur, who had recovered himself enough to draw a pistol. One or both shots hit him, for he rolled down and I lost sight of him in the confusion.

Bridget, with small ceremony, caught hold of Arthur, and dragged him on to the gallery by main force, saying:

"Best git your breath again, sor, before you're back at the fightin'. I'm thinking I'll heat the poker."

And off she went.

Arthur was bruised and half stunned, and it took him a few minutes to recover from the choking pressure that had nearly strangled him, so he lay still gasping for breath for a few minutes, then with an effort started to his feet, and went back to the fight.

There was little firing now. Our men were

reserving their shots for the last extremity, but with whatever weapon they could snatch up, they were defending the stair head. Every man's teeth were set hard in this last supreme effort, for once this position was carried, our fate was almost inevitably sealed. We three girls and Norah stood in the rear, as if spell-bound, waiting for the end.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Just then the soldiers filled the dome,
And shouting charged the rebels home,
So fiercely that in panic dread,
They broke, they yielded, fell, or fled."

Already our defenders were falling back slowly, absolutely giving way under the pressure of the numbers who were forcing up the stair four or five abreast.

The foremost of the rebels were falling under father's desperate and vigorous thrusts. He and Walter had each snatched up a pike, and were doing their utmost, for in the close quarters they were reduced to, strength told most.

Arthur was clearly hardly able to defend himself even; he supported himself against the banisters, as if without them he must sink down among the victims, who were being trampled underfoot by those surging up from the rear. Once or twice he narrowly escaped a thrust from some weapon. Once I saw old Mr. Harcourt ward off a terrible lunge at him, at cost of a wound on his own arm; but in the utter confusion that reigned little could be clearly seen, and there was wonderfully little noise now, except the clash of steel and the moan of some wounded man; it was for

life or death, and fought silently. Suddenly in the darkened hall some more figures appeared; I thought them more of our enemies, and only noticed one was remarkably fair, and that his hair shone golden even in the gloom, but with a wild cry of joy Lizzie exclaimed:

"Ah, God be praised, 'tis the soldiers!" and burst into tears.

She had recognized Major Tracy at once, and in another instant I knew Larry's voice, as with a shout the new-comers dashed at the rear of the rebels, and commenced a vigorous onslaught.

Taken by surprise, there was a general indescribable tumult, as some of the men turned round to face the rescuing party, while the garrison, gathering fresh energy with renewed hope, pressed down the stairs, driving back those who wavered with desperate efforts, till in the hall they all mingled together in a struggling mass, friend or foe alike almost undistinguishable to us above.

The sun for the last hour had been under heavy clouds, but now it shone out again for a few minutes before setting, and its last rays found their way into the hall, through one of the great windows which was but half shuttered up, and I could see on the staircase Mr. Harcourt's beautiful white hair; he had fallen on the next landing and lay motionless.

Bridget had just reappeared from the second or third heating of the poker, of which

she had made little use, as she could not get by our defenders; but now catching sight of Mr. Harcourt she said:

"Ah, poor old gintleman, sure I'll go to him," and ran down the stairs followed by Lizzie Walker. And just then looking down, I saw Arthur coming up; he waved me back as I would have met him, and reaching the top threw himself down looking more dead than alive.

"Give me some water, and tie this," he said, holding out his arm from which the blood was dropping.

Eveleen gave him some drink, and I bandaged the wound.

"It's nothing," he said, struggling against his faintness. "Only I can't afford to lose blood even by a scratch."

A tub of water stood near and he plunged his head in; that seemed to revive him, and standing up he was gathering himself together with the evident intention of returning to the fight, when there was a stifled cry on the stairs.

And to my horror I saw Flanagan had Lizzie struggling in his grasp. Bridget was attacking him with all her might, but vainly, for the poker was cold now, and the blows she rained on him took no effect on his iron frame.

Holding Lizzie still tightly, by an effort he threw himself over the banisters, and dropped

into the hall unperceived by any of her friends, for the fight was surging towards the great door. And with his prize in his grasp Flanagan was making off in the other direction, where through the various outlets he would have every chance in the disorder of making good his escape.

Rallying his failing strength Arthur dashed down, and also dropped himself over in pursuit.

Flanagan could draw no weapon, encumbered as his arms were. And Arthur closed with him, calling at the same time for help.

Flanagan, holding Lizzie fast with one arm, struck Arthur savagely with his full strength. Half faint as Arthur was he staggered a moment and fell under the gallery out of my sight; but Lizzie, half freed, pulled the pistol from her belt, and fired it against Flanagan; his arm dropped, and father who had heard Arthur's shout for help, snatched Lizzie from his grasp.

Major Tracy burst through a mass of men, unconscious of the blows rained on him, and flew like a lion at Flanagan. Seeing himself likely to be thus mastered Flanagan turned to fly, but as he ran discharged another shot; for whom it was meant none could tell, but Lizzie's head dropped suddenly on father's shoulder. Half beside himself with grief and anger, Tracy rushed after the rebel leader; but threading the passages swiftly Flanagan

got out, reached his horse, and galloped off.

Father ran up to us with Lizzie in his arms, signing to Eveleen and I to follow, and laid her on the nearest bed, saying hastily to me, "Look to the poor girl," and disappeared.

Norah joined us and we unfastened the dress tenderly.

On the soft white skin was just a round hole, but very little blood.

Eveleen said hopefully, "I hope she is not badly wounded."

Norah shook her head sadly.

"Shure, and Mrs. Walther, dear, I'm afraid this sort is the worst."

At that instant with scant ceremony Major Tracy burst in, his face drawn with anxiety; as he looked down on the poor girl's senseless form, I saw a change come over his expression as of one who has received a death-blow.

Eveleen said kindly, "Speak to her, Major Tracy, I think she is coming to," and wetted her lips with wine.

He did not respond, and Evie, who did not notice his face, said, "There is little loss of blood."

In hoarse, strained, agonizing tones Major Tracy answered her:

"She is bleeding to death inwardly; there is no hope."

Norah, who seemed to know it, only nodded her head sadly.

Eveleen's tears fell fast as she cried:

"Oh, don't say so, Major Tracy!"

"Bride, darling, call your mother, she is so clever."

Glad to do something, I ran for mother, and finding she, Norah, and Eveleen were all that was necessary to attend to Lizzie, I stole back to the gallery with the craving to find out how it fared with Arthur.

Major Tracy had returned to his men almost immediately; though it must have been a cruel trial to leave Lizzie thus with no certainty of seeing her alive again.

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